Photo *Lewis Langfier, Glasgow.*

A pretty apron's only meet
To deck a pretty maid;
Mine, bordered round with quaint conceit,
Is useless, I'm afraid,
To shield my frock from stain or spot—
And yet it's charming, is it not?

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"HELPING MOTHER."

From the Painting by Maude Goodman.

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FROM · THE · STALLS

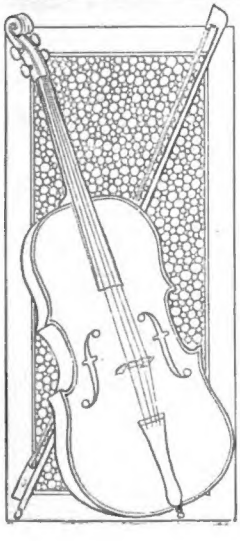

Photo *Foulsham & Banfield.*

DENISE ORME,

A Talented Violinist and Charming Musical Comedy Actress.

"I detest playing on other people's violins," remarked Miss Denise Orme—hers is a Cremonese from the hand of Guarnerius.

"Once I had to do it, though, at a Brighton Pier concert. Father hunted all over the town for a decent fiddle, because mine hadn't turned up. Poor dad did his level best, but how I longed for my own."

Miss Orme tells a funny story against herself. It happened in the "Little Michus." "I left the stage at the wrong time, and there they were singing about 'this little girl, and that little girl,' while this little girl was in her dressing-room. And then I came back in another dress, and all the references to my being so like the other little girl were turned into nonsense."

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Langfield

JOSEPH COYNE.

A Comedian from Across the Atlantic.

Mr. Joseph Coyne is a young, athletic American who played a semi-heroic part in the "Merry Widow" at Daly's Theatre.

Mr. Coyne's idea with regard to stage love-making is original. "Be funny with it," he says; "crack a joke now and again, it puts the girl and the audience in a good humour!"

Mr. Coyne had a horribly unpleasant, if not positively dangerous experience over in America. He had to crawl inside a partially-stuffed bear out of the way of an irate stage father. The property man forgot all about Mr. Coyne after the performance, and as it was impossible for him to get out without assistance he was almost suffocated, until he was missed by a fellow actor and rescued!

His first act was to hunt around for the property man with murderous intent, but that gentleman had discreetly made himself scarce.

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Photo

GRACE GEORGE.

A Delightful Visitor from the States.

"Every man in America is every other man's equal," says Miss Grace George, "but the politeness of English people is a fascinating and unusual experience to me.

"I find your shopwalkers the most dignified and courteous gentlemen, and nearly all my time off the stage I spent shopping. I have been buying right and left, and am quite heart-broken at the thought of leaving England—especially the shops."

Miss George's great love scenes in "Divorçons" were a triumph, and she finds English audiences the most orderly and attentive in the world. "They just come to see the play here," she says, "not to show themselves off."

She has a kind word for English stage doorkeepers and property masters, and even the scene-shifters are subjects for gracious praise—"They are a much superior class to what we have in the States," she remarks.

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Photo *Sydney H. Wood, Darlington.*

DOT STEPHENS.

A Pretty Variety Stage Favourite.

Last October a terrible accident happened to Miss Dot Stephens, the well-known music-hall artiste.

She was travelling in a corridor coach when she fell through one of the doors on to the line. Both her feet were hopelessly crushed by a passing train, and had to be amputated.

Messrs. Stoll, Bannister Howard, and Lennon, for whom she was appearing, were very good to her. They gave benefit matinées and arranged cricket matches at which considerable sums were raised, for no one thought she would ever work again.

But she has been fitted with two wonderful artificial feet costing £200, and can walk a couple of miles without fatigue and without the aid of a stick.

Better still, she has restarted her theatrical work.

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Photo *Bassano.*

PAULINE CHASE,

Who Charmed Every Child that Saw "Peter Pan."

In America—her native land—Miss Pauline Chase always went by the name of "Polly Chase." The nick-name was once the means of bringing her a slice of good luck. She was attending a race-meeting, and on looking down the list she noticed the name of "Pretty Polly." She knew nothing of racing matters, but thought it would be good sport to back her own name. She made her bet and came out a handsome winner time after time.

Miss Chase dearly loves children, and children idolise her in Xmas pieces.

She is fond of motoring, and owns two cars. A manager wanted her to go back to America, but she said: "No, the roads are so much better for motoring in England."

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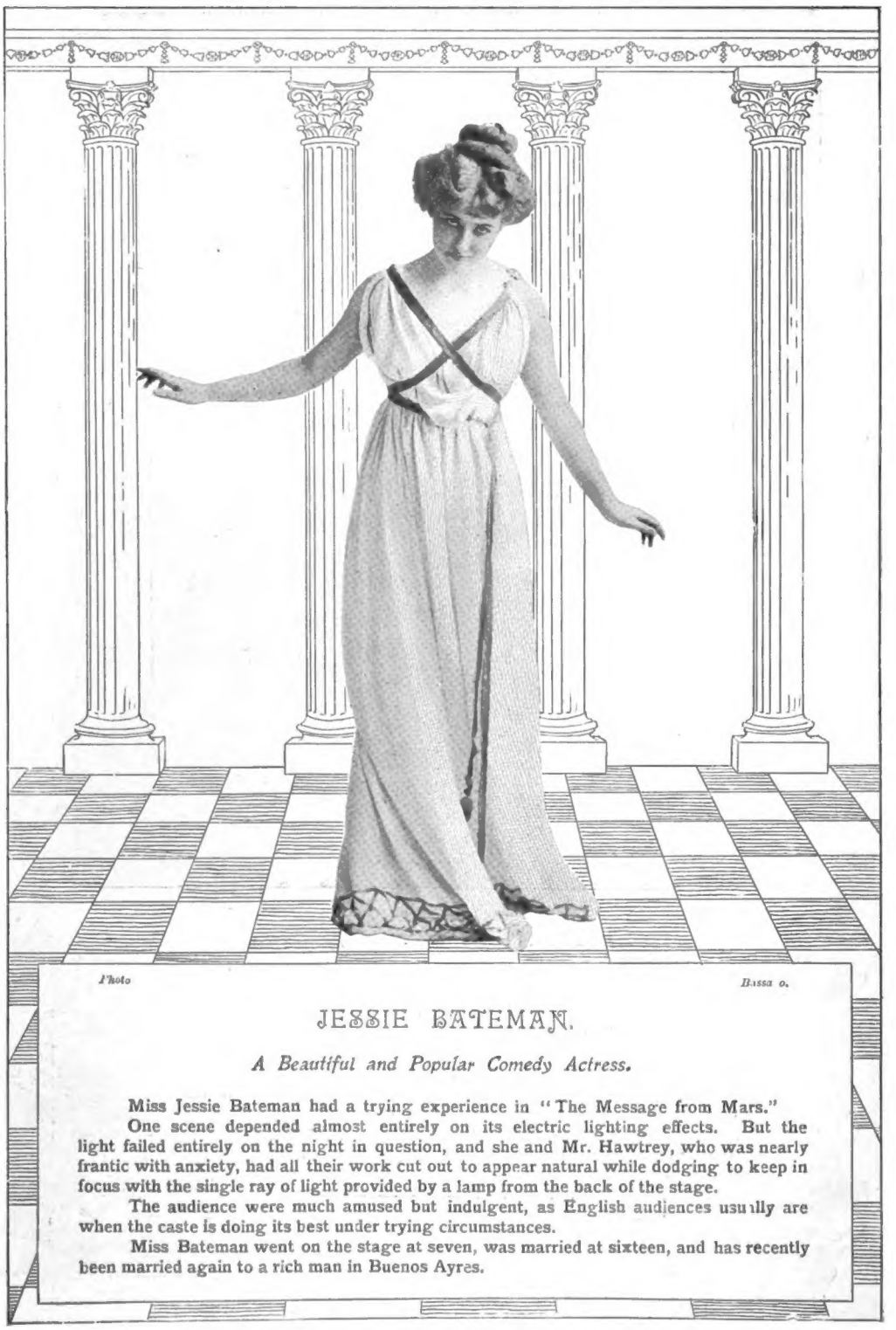

Photo *Bassa o.*

JESSIE BATEMAN.

A Beautiful and Popular Comedy Actress.

Miss Jessie Bateman had a trying experience in "The Message from Mars." One scene depended almost entirely on its electric lighting effects. But the light failed entirely on the night in question, and she and Mr. Hawtrey, who was nearly frantic with anxiety, had all their work cut out to appear natural while dodging to keep in focus with the single ray of light provided by a lamp from the back of the stage.

The audience were much amused but indulgent, as English audiences usually are when the caste is doing its best under trying circumstances.

Miss Bateman went on the stage at seven, was married at sixteen, and has recently been married again to a rich man in Buenos Ayres.

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THE QUESTS of PAUL BECK.

No. VIII.—DRIVEN HOME.

By M. McDonnell Bodkin, K.C.

Another Exciting Exploit of the Famous Detective, Paul Beck, wherein he Effects an Arrest in Dramatic Circumstances.

A Complete Story.

"It was his luck," so Mr. Beck always said. "The whole thing might have happened to any man." But no person who had heard the story quite agreed with him.

It was luck, of course, that he found the silver spoon in the hansom cab. Prying about keenly, as was his wont, he saw the thin white edge shining behind one of the cushions and fished out a curious-looking teaspoon and put it in his pocket.

He had a good look at the number of the hansom and the driver when he got out. The hansom was one of the neatest in London, with a sweet little twelve-mile-an-hour mare between the shafts. The driver was a stoutly built, jaunty fellow, with mottled face and big red nose. He was smartly dressed, with a nosegay in his button-hole and cigar between his teeth.

Mr. Beck dismissed his cab and walked to Mr. Ophir, the famous jeweller and silversmith whose name was on the spoon.

He was received by Mr. Ophir himself—a mark of special distinction—in the little glass pavilion in the centre of the glittering warehouse.

Yes, Mr. Ophir knew the spoon very well. It was one of a set made by his house in imitation of the old apostle pattern. Very creditable imitation; he should say it would need a skilled eye to tell the difference.

"Who got them?" asked Mr. Beck, going straight to the point.

"Who got them! Let me see; just one moment. It is in the books, of course, but I ought to be able——" He tapped his forehead, that was smooth and round and polished as an ostrich egg. "Oh yes, of course, they were part of a tea set made as a wedding present for Lord Worder. Now I remember, they were stolen about a month ago."

"The suburban burglaries," interrupted Mr. Beck, and he slapped his big thigh excitedly with his broad palm—an unusual lapse on the part of the most stolid of men.

But his excitement was surely pardonable.

The London police had for the last few months been startled, amazed, bewildered by a rapid series of brilliant burglaries, all within a fifteen to twenty mile radius of London.

"The cribs had been cracked" in the highest style of art, and the artists with their rich booty had vanished into space, leaving as little trail as a fish through the water. They were gentlemen who did not stick at trifles. Three times, it would appear, they had been interrupted at their work, and three people had been left for dead behind them, and one—a woman—had died.

No wonder then that Mr. Beck was excited for a moment at the hope that his "luck" had put him on the track of the suburban burglaries at last. But his excitement was quenched instantly like a spark fallen in water. It was the good-humoured, easy-going, imperturbable Mr. Beck who walked home to his cosy lodgings to puzzle his plan out.

He plunged into a great easy-chair, with a pipe stem between his teeth and the spoon before him on the table, as a saint sets a skull to concentrate his meditations. It would be worse than useless, he determined, to arrest

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or even question the driver. If he knew anything he wouldn't tell it, and plainly he could not be responsible for a silver spoon dropped behind the cushion of his hansom.

If the man were guilty—and Mr. Beck fondly hoped he was guilty—a hint of suspicion would ruin all. So Mr. Beck sat and smoked and thought, and as the smoke grew denser his thoughts cleared.

"If I could only get quietly inside that fellow's skin," he thought, and with the thought came his plan of campaign. Then he put by the little silver spoon and smoked his pipe out in vacuous enjoyment.

The result of his meditations was that Mr. Beck—this time a simple-looking farmer up for the cattle show—had a drive in the same hansom next day and found the cab neater and the mare faster than he imagined.

He got in talk with the driver, whose name he discovered was Jem Blunt. The Cockney cabby made game of the simple-minded yokel. They had several drinks together, and Mr. Beck noted that the spirited little mare was trained to stand quietly as a lamb when the driver was away.

Next day Mr. Beck was a portly clergyman on a shopping expedition. He took Mr. Blunt's hansom here, there, and everywhere, and acquired a multitude of parcels. A most genial and cheerful clergyman was Mr. Beck and most affable with his driver, with whom he talked a good deal and whom he talked into the best of good-humour. That was at first.

Towards evening the zealous clergyman broached the Temperance question with a distinct personal application, and Mr. Blunt got sullen. In parting, the Rev. Mr. Beck presented his driver with his exact legal fare, and Mr. Blunt was furious. He spoke his views fully and freely, and the other looked and listened, storing up every trick of face and voice in his retentive memory. Then when a policeman loomed in sight at last, the meek Mr. Beck turned away with a Christian benediction and meditatively mounted the steps of his lodgings. He had seen and heard enough of his model.

For two days after this Mr. Beck was a shop messenger in uniform, with a light tricycle parcel cart, quite empty; and wherever Mr. Blunt drove his hansom the tricycle cart unobtrusively followed, faithful as the little lamb to Mary in the nursery rhyme.

In this way the patient Mr. Beck found out many things. He found that Mr. Blunt was not keen on fares and was keen on sport and drink. He spent his leisure moments—often all day—in the sanctum of a certain sporting public-house in the East End called the "Ram's Horn." There he met a convivial commercial traveller named Fulham and a bookmaker named Grimes, and the three drank and played cards, while a tricycle cart with a heavy, stupid-looking rider went past the door occasionally.

There was another change; a startling one this time.

Mr. Paul Beck became Mr. James Blunt. In clothes and figure and face and voice, in all his tricks and ways, the counterfeit was perfect. Mr. Blunt's wife or mother could not have found a difference.

The translated Mr. Beck took to dropping into the "Ram's Horn" on his own account at odd times when he had reason to believe Mr. Blunt was elsewhere with a fare. He was made free of the sanctum, and the unsophisticated commercial traveller Fulham and the genial bookmaker Grimes received him as "Jim" with rough but unsuspecting cordiality.

They were both big, strong men, active and sleek, who spent money freely. They were full of sly, chuckling jokes about "business" when the three were drinking together. A very little time was needed to convince Mr. Beck by a hundred trivial hints that he was on the straight track of the suburban burglars. A dozen times in an hour he seemed on the point of surprising some definite proof. But lead the talk as cunningly as he might, he could get no further. For the others assumed he knew as much as themselves, and he dared not appear too curious.

It was a dangerous game. An indiscreet question might arouse suspicion, and suspicion meant death. Besides, it was a ticklish thing playing Box and Cox with the real Mr. Blunt, who had a knack of throwing up his engagements and turning up at unexpected times. Twice Mr. Beck had barely time to slip away quietly before his double appeared.

It was in truth a difficult and dangerous game, but he played it out coolly and warily to the close.

Instinctively he felt that things grew suddenly to a climax. A new burglary was on foot; so much he could gather from stray hints. Unfortunately the coup had been planned with the real Jim Blunt, and so the knowledge of the false Jim Blunt was taken for granted. He only learnt that a crib was to be cracked some distance outside London, and that the three were to take part in the cracking. Even the night he could not make quite sure of.

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He determined on a final effort at any cost to get hold of the secret.

An appointment was made with the real Mr. Blunt to call for an old lady at the theatre. At eleven precisely the mock Mr. Blunt strolled into the inner parlour of the "Ram's Horn" with his driving whip under his arm, as though he had just stepped down from the driver's seat of his hansom. He had a ball of whipcord in his hand and was platting a new cracker for his whip thong, as was the habit of the real Mr. Blunt.

Both his friends were there smoking cigars and drinking champagne out of pewter.

"Hello! Jim," cried Fulham, "up to time and before it. Want that for to-night?"—pointing to the whipcord. "Susie must put her best leg foremost." "Susie" was the sweet little mare.

"Have a touch of the whipcord yourself," he added, pushing towards him a bright tankard crowned with white foam, "that will put spunk in you."

Mr. Beck blew off the foam and had a deep pull of the liquor that shone golden in the glass-bottomed tankard.

"Luck!" he said, as he put the vessel down half empty. Mr. Blunt was inclined to be laconic, not to say sullen, in his cups.

"Got the tools all right?" he added, pointing to the pocket of Mr. Grimes, which bulged and dragged a little as with a hidden weight.

"You bet," said Mr. Grimes, and he exhibited with pardonable professional pride a jemmy, a revolver, and an electric dark lantern, all of the latest and neatest pattern.

"Nasty job and nasty night," Mr. Blunt's understudy grumbled hoarsely in the recesses of his pewter.

"You be d——d, Jim," retorted Mr. Fulham cheerily; "are you afraid the draught will give you a cold in your blooming nut, my rosebud? Want a big, yellow moon and a nightingale, you do. It's a picked night for our little picnic. Hark to the wind screaming like a drunken fishwife."

"It was the job itself I was thinking of worse nor the weather," he grumbled, still sulky.

"The job!" cried Mr. Fulham indignantly, "why there never was a neater thing put up since we went into business. It is as easy as kiss hands. Hubby is away for a week's shooting; missis is young and timid. The butler—the only man in the house—is a heavy sleeper, told Grimes so himself, and he ought to know. He has got twenty quid down as a sleeping draught, and he is to get twenty more when the job is through. He's that forgetful I shouldn't be surprised if he were to leave the kitchen window open and the key in the plate closet before he went to bed. Eh! Grimes?" and the wink he gave was full of expression. "The place is chock full of silver; a regular Peruvian mine. The wedding presents alone made a column in the *Times*, all waiting peacefully to be carried away. If that's a nasty job I'd feel obliged"—with elaborate politeness—"for your notion of a nice one?"

"It's a long way to get to," objected the grumbler half apologetically.

"A long way! I don't know what's come to you to-night, Jim; a long way! it's fifteen mile, not an inch more."

"I make it better nor twenty."

"Do you think it's an old-lady fare you're jawing, Jim? It's under fifteen, if anything. You goes out by Kensington, you see, and then you turns round to the——"

Mr. Beck was listening with both his ears, but at this moment the shock head of the potboy was thrust in at the door.

"Hansom's waiting, gents, and——"

Then he caught sight of the mock Mr. Blunt, and stood with eyes and mouth extended to the uttermost—a grotesque statue of amazement. He had been honoured with a kick and a curse by the real Mr. Blunt a moment before.

But Mr. Beck gave him no time for thought or speech.

"Come along!" he shouted to the others, "time's up!"

He bundled the bewildered boy out before him into the street and discreetly disappeared in the black shadow beside the door.

The others only waited to polish off their pewter pints of champagne and come grumbling out after him, and climbed into their places in the hansom. Mr. Blunt was in the driver's seat, with a huge portmanteau in front of him on the roof.

"Know the way now, Jim?" Mr. Beck heard Mr. Fulham say to the driver.

"Do you take me for a darn fool?" was the gruff reponse. The trap-door on the roof was slapped down hard, the driver's whip cracked, and the hansom sped away swiftly.

For a short second Mr. Beck stood helpless. But he had hardly time to say "d——n" once when his eye lit upon a bicycle that leant against the wall while the owner had gone into the "Ram's Horn" for a drink.

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"'Set a thief to catch a thief,'" he muttered between his teeth. "I'll qualify."

The next second he was astride the machine, scorching down the street in swift pursuit of the vanishing hansom.

For a while he kept pace with it easily enough, slipping in and out through the traffic like an eel. But gradually they drew clear of the town, the long road stretched clear before them, and the mare flew.

Mr. Beck settled himself on his hard saddle. The bicycle did not suit him. It was heavy and the stretch was too short, and the pedals brought his knees within an inch of the handle-bars as they rose. But he struggled on bravely, keeping the shadowy outline of the hansom well in view.

The road turned sharply, and the rush of the strong wind came straight against him like a broad hand on his chest holding him back. But he was a powerful rider, and he put his weight and strength into each drive of the pedal, shoving his way through the wind like a steamer through a current.

It was cruel work. The wind whistled and tore past him; his muscles ached, and the sweat fell from his bent face in big drops on the road, but he still kept the flying shadow of the hansom in view. The strain grew tenser still. He felt the pedals push back against his feet as he drove them down. The road sloped abruptly, and the vague outline of the hansom gradually merged in the darkness.

"The game is up," Mr. Beck muttered through his clenched teeth, but at the same moment came the remembrance of that ball of whipcord in his pocket and a use for it.

Slacking speed for an instant, with hand and teeth he made a running noose at one end of the cord and tied the other to the handle bar. Then he grasped the handle bar tight in the middle, bent head and shoulders over it, and put all the strength of his body into one mad spurt up the hill. It was agony while it lasted. He felt the veins in his forehead swell, his heart thumped fiercely against his ribs and his breath came in labouring sobs, but still the bicycle leapt on through the wind.

Slowly the hansom came back to him. The outline grew clearer and darker. Nearer and nearer he crept, and at last his stretched fingers slipped the noose over the curl of the back rail. He had shot his bolt; he could not have kept up the terrible strain for ten yards more. He let the cord slip till it came tight with a jerk that almost whipped the bicycle from under him. But he steadied himself in a moment and then, with a fresh wind blowing cool against his burning face, he felt his bicycle glide smoothly and swiftly uphill of its own accord in the wake of the flying hansom.

He straightened his chest and drew deep breaths of the cool air into his labouring lungs, and still the bicycle flew smoothly, easily, and almost as swiftly as a bird.

So they sped on, mile after mile, uphill for the most part, with now and again a sudden dip in the road that slackened the tense cord and brought Mr. Beck's hands to the brakes for a time.

An hour and a quarter had passed—Mr. Beck could guess the time better than most modern watches—when the hansom drew up suddenly on the crest of a long hill, and the fast following bicycle almost ran into it.

Mr. Beck, who had been expecting a halt, saved and steadied himself with a firm grip on the back rail of the hansom, and waited and listened.

He heard the trap-door open and Fulham's voice say: "Take it easy now, Jim; the house is on the slope of the hill not a quarter of a mile off. We must get round by the back way, and leave the horse and trap in the lane. The middle window at the back is open ready for us."

Mr. Beck waited to hear no more. He undid the cord from the rail, gathered it up in a loose fistful; then, where the shadow was blackest, slid silently past the hansom down the incline.

In a moment the hansom began to move again slowly and cautiously. It would almost seem as if the well-trained little mare knew silence was needed, so lightly she stepped.

All things went well with the three brave burglars. At the bottom of the lane a convenient stand was found for the docile mare, and she was left with her nose buried in a feed of old oats. The window opened at a touch, and one after another the three dark forms crept stealthily through, the last pushing the big portmanteau in to the others.

"I have the glim," Grimes whispered, and the gleam of the electric lantern lay along the black passage.

They crept past the kitchen and wine cellars to a strong oak door with the key stuck in the lock. It opened on oiled hinges, and the light glittered on piles of silver.

"Cricky!" was Fulham's expressive comment as he and Grimes passed through with lantern and portmanteau, while Blunt waited in the passage with revolver ready.

The gaping mouth of the portmanteau seemed to open of its own accord to ingulf the glittering treasure. It was wonderful how

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quickly and how noiselessly salvers and cups and bowls and jugs, with double fistfuls of silver spoons for packing, were crammed into its capacious stomach. In ten minutes it lay on the floor locked and strapped and gorged with heavy metal.

"I could do with a drink," said Fulham, straightening his back and wiping his hot face.

"I'll get one," said Grimes. "I know the way of the place." He came back with a bottle of champagne in each hand and one under his arm. "Friend in court," he exclaimed. They got the corks out in a trice and drank the foaming liquor from silver.

"Nasty job this," said Fulham with a wink at Grimes, "eh! Jim?"

"Awful night," replied Grimes with responsive wink, "sorry you came, Jim?"

"Who are you coming at?" growled Blunt. "I see nothing wrong with the night, or the job, or the drink either, for the matter of that."

"Who are we coming at? We are coming at you. You don't like this and you don't like that. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Miss Molly?"

"For two straws I'd give you a wipe across your blooming mug. I was readier for the game than you were."

"Just listen to him, Fulham, will you?" cried the justly indignant Grimes. "You was as ready as I was!"

"Aye, and readier!"

"Then why did you come whining about it?"

Blunt's big fist was clenched, and the prudent Fulham thought it time to intervene in the interest of peace.

"You're a brace of bally idiots," said the peacemaker. "Business first and pleasure afterwards. You may bash each other into small bits when we have got the swag safe.

Slowly the hansom came back to him. The outline grew clearer and darker. Nearer and nearer he crept.

Here, lend a hand with the portmantle, Grimes; it's time to be rambling."

"What about upstairs?" said Blunt, returning to business, the more anxious to show his pluck and gumption from Grimes' sneers. "There will be whips of jewels where there's so much plate."

"Have a try while Grimes and I bring this

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load out to the trap," said Fulham; "there's a second lantern."

"Heavy!" grunted Grimes, as they lugged the portmanteau along the passage.

"You'd like it light, would you?" chuckled Fulham.

Blunt crept cautiously up the broad staircase, his stockinged feet sinking noiselessly in the deep velvet pile of the carpet. He paused for a moment at the drawing-room door and let a beam of light from his lantern fall across the pitch darkness of the big room.

"Nick-nacks and pictures and crockery-ware," he muttered contemptuously; "I'm not taking any, thank ye."

Softly as a great cat the burly ruffian moved up to the next floor along the narrow lane of light the lantern made for him through the darkness. In the still silence he could hear the tick of the great clock in the hall like the beating of a hammer.

To his right and left were doors. He put his hand gently on the knob to the left and turned. The light of the lantern flashed back in his dazzled eyes from a great mirror that fronted him as he entered, and glittered among the jewels that lay scattered on the dressing-table.

His delight found vent in a whispered blasphemy. Setting his lantern on the dressing-table, he began to cram the jewels greedily into his knotted handkerchief.

His elbow struck a porcelain ring stand and it went down with a clatter of metal and broken china on the carpet. The gems were scattered and rolled and lay twinkling like coloured fireflies in the lantern's rays. Blunt stooped to gather them in the half darkness. He was still on his knees when suddenly the whole room flashed out in the brilliant glow of a dozen electric lights.

Turning round sharply he saw a lady fronting him not five yards away.

She was graceful and beautiful as a statue in her long white night robe, fastened with a knot of blue ribbons at the throat. Her naked feet peeped from under the lace trimming pure white on the rich carpet. Down to her waist her hair fell in a tangle of ripples and curls. Her face was white even to the lips, but her blue eyes shone big and bright, and she held in her right hand a revolver grasped tight by the barrel, the muzzle pointing at herself and the butt at the burglar.

Jim Blunt was not in the least affected by this vision of pale beauty. To him she was merely an unwelcome interruption of business.

"Drop it!" he growled, referring to the inverted revolver.

She dropped it obediently and it exploded as it fell and a shrill shriek followed the report. The room was full of the stinging smoke of gunpowder.

Jim Blunt cursed volubly.

"Shut your blooming mouth!" he cried; "quit squealing or I'll put a bullet in you!"

A second shrill shriek answered and the lady opened her lovely lips wide for a third.

Blunt whipped out his revolver and pointed it, right side forward, straight at her breast.

The scream was frozen on the lady's lips by sheer amazement, when straight behind the ruffian she saw his own counterfeit suddenly appear moving swiftly and silently as a shadow.

The revolver in Jim's hand went up with a sudden jerk, boring a round black hole in the white ceiling. A strong arm gripped his bull neck from behind and brought him choking and sprawling on his back on the carpet. The next moment he lay with handcuffs on his wrists and a gag between his teeth, prone and helpless.

Again the lady screamed shrilly.

"Not any more please, Mrs. Meredith," said a familiar voice persuasively.

"Mr. Beck!" she gasped out in utter amazement.

"Take it coolly, my dear lady, the surprise is nearly as great on my part, I assure you, at this pleasant meeting. I will explain everything later on. Just now I have a lot to do that won't wait. I am afraid I must leave this brute here with you. Don't look so frightened! he's quite harmless. I'll tie his feet and kick him into the bathroom."

He drew the serviceable ball of whipcord from his pocket and strained it tight, coil after coil, round Blunt's legs and arms till he lay parcelled up stiff and helpless as a log.

"You can make the maids roll him downstairs into the cellar if you like later on," said Mr. Beck—"no! not the butler, I have taken the liberty of turning the key on the butler. You had best leave him where he is till I come back for him."

Hark! His keen ear caught the noise of the men below climbing back through the window. There was not an instant to spare. He pushed the prostrate and helpless Blunt with his foot across the carpet into the bathroom and turned the key in the door.

"Good-bye," he said, re-adjusting the false nose that had got slightly displaced during his exertions. "Our friends have heard the shots. I don't wish to give them the trouble of coming up. I'll meet them on the stairs."

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A strong arm gripped his bull neck from behind and brought him choking and sprawling on his back on the carpet.

He passed out quickly, closing the door after him. Not a moment too soon.

"That Jim?" said Fulham in a cautious whisper.

"Stow your noise!" Mr. Beck growled in the identical voice that was at that moment corked up by the gag in the mouth of the recumbent Mr. Blunt. "Stow your noise, it's all right, I'm coming."

He joined them on the landing opposite the drawing-room door.

"Why the blazes did you use the barkers?" growled Grimes.

"'Cause I had to; she was squealing like a

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mad steam engine. I laid her out safe the second shot. She'll tell no tales; but it's about time to be off. I've got the swag safe enough," and he showed the heap of trinkets that poor Blunt had so industriously collected.

"Right you are," answered Fulham, "the luggage is up and the mare ready."

There was a pounding noise on the floor over their heads.

"Listen!" said Grimes, "there is someone kicking. You haven't made a clean job of it, Jim, she wants another dose of lead; I'll quiet her."

He turned to go up the stairs but Mr. Beck's strong hand dragged him back. *He* knew whose hob-nailed boots were kicking the bath-room floor. "Let be, I tell you; it's her last kick; she's got a brace of bullets in her skull. I can do my work without your helping."

He pushed Grimes roughly down the stairs before him, Fulham following. So through the window they passed and down the lane-way where the hansom stood and the mare ready waiting with ears cocked.

Grimes and Fulham got to their places and Mr. Beck climbed to the driver's seat with the big portmanteau tied in front of him.

He closed the wooden apron across their knees and let the plate glass shutter down half-way to meet it.

The gallant little mare started as fresh as ever and they bowled swiftly on noiseless, rubber-tyred wheels back to town.

Grimes and Fulham had carried a couple of bottles of champagne with them and the noise of the popping corks was heard presently in the interior of the hansom. After a brief interval, a bottle's neck was protruded through the trap door at the top.

"I'm not taking any," said the driver, "I have the mare to look after—and you."

"Good old Jim!" said Grimes effusively, elated at the prospect of more drink to share, "we can trust Jim to see us through. He knows where we are bound for, better nor ourselves"—which was truer than the speaker thought.

The two bottles were duly emptied and the two inside passengers were pleasantly drowsy though not in the least drunk. They leant back at either side on the comfortable cushions while the hansom sped on its smooth, noiseless way to London.

Now they are sweeping through the silent town in the grey light of the early dawn. The streets seemed a little unfamiliar to their sleepy, half-opened eyes. But they had the most perfect confidence in Jim.

Their confidence was rudely shattered. The hansom took a sharp turn and drew up with a scramble at the entrance to Scotland Yard. The plate-glass shutter was let slip down on the wooden apron and Mr. Beck leapt from his seat to the pavement.

"Hurry up! Hurry up;" he shouted, as four or five men came rushing out, while the two figures trapped in the hansom struggled madly like wild beasts in a cage. "Here are two of the suburban burglars, with their luggage, come to stay. Kindly help the two gentlemen out and make them comfortable while I go back for the third, who has arranged to wait for me."

♦ ♦ ♦

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

Penelope is four foot ten—
Though, may be, at a pinch,
With higher heels she might contrive
To gain, p'r'aps, half-an-inch.
Yet, even if she walks on stilts,
The fact remains that she
Is, after all, but four foot ten,
While I am six foot three.

Penelope, but four foot ten
(Though upright as a dart),
Without her heels is tall enough,
With ease, to reach my heart.
Indeed, to me the wonder is
(Though I am six foot three)
That she (though only four foot ten)
Should stoop to marry me!

Ada Leonora Harris.

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THE LIFE HISTORY OF A COBRA

This is the First of a New Series of Intensely Interesting Articles Dealing with Wild Life in the Indian Jungle.

By

Sarath Kumar Ghosh

SARATH KUMAR GHOSH, the author of the unique series of articles, the first of which, "The Life History of a Cobra," appears on the succeeding pages, is an Indian of high caste. Educated partly in India, but largely in England, his wonderful mastery of the English language will not fail to astonish all who read his articles. His photograph in full national costume gives an excellent idea of his actual appearance, though this is naturally rather less splendid in conventional European garb.

Of middle height, and strongly built, what strikes one most forcibly on first meeting him is the keen, penetrating glance of his dark eyes. He is the very incarnation of energy, and his rapid, vivacious conversation metaphorically carries his listeners completely off their feet.

His great aim and ideal is to make English people better acquainted with their Indian fellow subjects, and it is to this end that he has devoted himself to literature, although a member of the English Bar.

Mr. Ghosh is an extremely able lecturer, and, indeed, when one has heard him speak on some congenial subject, this is easily understood. He seems to forget everything except the point at issue, and becomes the very picture of animation and eagerness; it is in moments such as these that the more florid Asiatic temperament is in the ascendant, clearly demonstrating that Western education has not been able to impair his original vigour of expression.

Readers of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE *are already familiar with his work in the shape of the "Indian Nights' Entertainments," in which he drew a wondrous store of gems from the vast treasure-house of Oriental romance.*

Though of a different type to the articles he is now contributing to THE ROYAL, *yet they illustrate in a remarkable degree the extraordinary picturesqueness of diction which distinguishes his literary achievements.*

Photo Ellis & Walery.

सरत् कुमार घोष

The series now commencing in THE ROYAL *incorporates most of the hereditary knowledge of jungle lore possessed by Indian* shikaris—*or native hunters—and portrays, with remarkable vividness, the strange and at times almost human characteristics of wild animals.*

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"I SHALL tell the Heaven-born the true history of my pet from the beginning." And the pet which Moolraj fondled was a full-fanged cobra, five and a half feet long and as thick as my wrist. It was lying coiled up in a basket by his side.

I wanted to hear Moolraj; for he was a serpent-charmer and the very king of shikaris.

"And then the Heaven-born will perhaps repeat my words to the English people, and so my name shall be known," he added with great pride.

That was my very object. English men and women, especially the latter, had such a vague terror of the cobra. Perhaps actual information on the subject would lessen that terror.

"Tell me particularly such things about the cobra as are usually unknown to English people," I asked him. "Interesting things, as well as useful. Now start from the beginning. Where did you catch it?"

"In a *surki* heap," he answered significantly.

Now a *surki* heap is merely housebreakers' *débris*. When a brick-built house has been pulled down, if the old mortar and broken bricks be kept lying in a neglected heap, then if there be a cobra within walking distance, it will surely take up its lodgings there, especially if the cobra be a female expecting to hatch her brood. For in the rains the holes in the ground are flooded, but a *surki* heap is comparatively dry. So let the English visitor beware of letting such *débris* lie neglected within the shadow of his bungalow! Or if it be too late, and the cobra be already in residence, then let him send for Moolraj or one of his brethren.

"Yes, the cobra was in such a heap, and none could dislodge it till the master of the adjacent house asked for me. I came and sat down five yards from the *surki*, and started playing on my flute."

The serpent-charmer's flute, I may explain, has a big bulb in the middle, and produces exactly the same species of music as the Highland bagpipes, which, Saxon scoffers notwithstanding, is the best testimony to the true musical quality of the bagpipes. For the average cobra is a better judge of music than the average man, and, besides the serpent-charmer's flute, loves the violin. With the violin Kubelik might deceive the average audience by purposely playing a consecutive octave or any other barbarism, but he could not deceive a self-respecting cobra, as he would discover to his cost if he were within striking distance of the enraged creature's fangs. But I am anticipating. Let us hear Moolraj. He spoke in ornate Hindi; I merely give the substance of his narrative in plain English.

"I had not played for more than ten minutes when suddenly I espied two glistening points of light on the *surki*, and a forked tongue darting in and out between them. Then soon after several pairs of eyes came into view beside the other. They were the young brood, about a month old.

"Gradually the mother drew herself full twelve inches out, when I stood up and receded backwards, still playing. She hesitated a moment; I played softer and receded further. She came out of the heap to hear me better.

"Then having thus drawn her near, I began to circle round her in a spiral, coming closer to her gradually. She also turned and faced me, but with an uneven motion; for she could turn half round by muscular action alone, but then was compelled to sweep her tail round for support. I noted that critical point.

"Meanwhile, playing with the left hand, I filled my right hand with some fine dust I had in a pouch at my girdle. Then at a critical point, when her uplifted length was for the moment in unstable equilibrium owing to the sweeping tail being off the ground in the act of turning, I cast the handful of dust over her head with a swift motion, temporarily blinding both eyes. She dropped her head on the ground—I knew it could only be for about a second—but continuing the same rapid motion of the right hand after casting the dust, I caught her by the neck almost as soon as she had reached the ground.

"Had I missed my aim, had I been half-a second too late, or caught the neck an inch too low, then I should have been a dead man within the hour. As it was, she immediately coiled her body round my right arm, hoping to make me release my hold by the constriction. But the constriction takes a little time, as it has to be worked by a gradual process of muscular tension; and I gave no time. Holding her by the neck just below the head, I worked my thumb in beneath her till it was against her throat. I pressed the thumb and lifted her up from the ground. She was quite helpless for the moment. I pressed the thumb still harder, and thus forced the lower jaw to hang down, exposing the poison fangs in the upper jaw. Then I took out a pair of pincers from my girdle with the left hand, and broke the fangs.

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"I cast the handful of dust over her head with a swift motion, temporarily blinding both eyes."

"No, I was not quite done with her, though she was now fangless; she was still constricting my right arm furiously. So I laid aside the pincers and brought my left hand against her throat, released the right hand from her neck and simultaneously closed the left upon it, thus holding her now with the left hand.

"No, I did not allow her time *to unwrap herself rapidly from my right arm and transfer her coils to my left arm.* Instead I swiftly circled my right arm in the opposite direction to the coils, and thus unwound two or three rounds of the coils below the head. Then immediately closing my right hand on the unwound portion of her body, *I squeezed her hard with it*, and continued the squeezing along the rest of the unwound portion by slipping my hand down tight.

"The effect of the squeezing? It was *to dislocate the muscles and small bones*, and thus render her *powerless to coil* that portion of her body. Thus I undid the rest gradually and squeezed it in like manner. Then the cobra hung limp and inert from my left hand, powerless to coil, or even to crawl out when I dropped her into a basket.

"No, the incapacity is only temporary. If left alone for a few hours the muscles and small bones would get back into position. In fact, the next day when I opened the basket she lashed out at me viciously. I gave her away afterwards to a poor comrade for street exhibition, as he was not skilful enough to catch one himself. As for her young ones, I caught five of them by clearing away the *surki* heap. They were quite harmless.

"Yes, I reared them all. But this one, my pet, my Kala-Nag, was the best of the five. Seeing that he was more beautifully marked than the others, I always fed him with my own hand, on milk; hot, steaming. Cobras are just mad on milk, even full-grown ones. They like birds' eggs well enough, and small fish, frogs, fieldmice, even slugs; but hot milk they can never resist even when full fed, which makes for the safety of man—as I shall afterwards explain.

So I fed the young ones on milk; half a *seer* I would pour on a dish, and they would dip their heads and drink to satiety. But Kala-Nag, my pet, I fed separately—holding a shellful of milk in my right hand, and allowing him to crawl up the arm, coil himself round my wrist, and drink.

"When the fangs grew? Ah, I looked out for that! Each day, after gorging himself with the milk, he would have a little sleep. Then on awaking he would be quite playful, and would crawl up and down my arm. That contented mood was my opportunity; I would hold him for a moment by the neck, and by pressing my thumb gently against the throat force him to open the jaws. Thus I could watch daily the growing fangs. Would the Heaven-born see?"

Here Moolraj broke off suddenly, and placed his hand gently on the neck of the cobra reposing in the basket by his side

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The action *seemed* careless, but I could see that Moolraj was prepared for emergencies. A serpent-charmer dealing with a fanged cobra carries his life in his hand; for there is no such thing as a really tame cobra Even if the creature has had his fill, any slight irritation, however unintentional, may be disastrous.

So Moolraj gently stroked down the body with his other hand till the cobra seemed to awake and even to yawn—or show his fangs. Then Moolraj used the thumb pressure, very gently, and the yawn seemed to increase. Thus I saw full into the mouth.

"The Heaven-born will notice the two poison fangs on the upper jaw, each about the size of a grain of rice. They are well forward, one on either side of the jaw just below each eye. Behind each fang there is a row of teeth getting smaller and smaller towards the interior of the mouth. These are all in varying and successive stages of growth. Now if either of the poison fangs gets broken, the tooth immediately behind it comes forward in due course, completes its growth, and becomes a new fang. And if that also gets broken, the next one comes forward—and so on till the last tooth has been used up. Thus if a serpent-charmer wishes to keep a fangless cobra he must periodically break off the new fangs.

"Nature's purpose in supplying the cobra with the possibility of new fangs? No, it is not in contemplation of a serpent-charmer's breaking off the fangs, for Nature takes no account of him. It is simply to provide against the emergencies of the cobra's own mode of life. The cobra sometimes breaks the old fangs accidentally. The fangs curve *inwards* to afford a better grip; but that very fact may cause them to be broken off if they close too suddenly against, say, the bone of a large rat. My Kala-Nag may thus have three sets of fangs to carry him through life. This is his second set, the first having been accidentally broken."

I implored Moolraj to replace the cobra, and continue his narrative without the horrible ocular demonstration. He smiled and put back the serpent into the basket. I felt relieved.

"Yes, he is now in the full vigour of his life. Latterly, since the growth of his fangs, I have fed him on small fish, reserving the milk for special occasions when I wanted to soothe him. I hold the fish by the tail-end and show it to him at arm's length. He immediately raises his head, expands his hood, and after one oscillation to take aim, darts upon it, and grips it by the head. Then by a muscular action of the jaws he *sucks in* the fish till it disappears down his throat, his body expanding around the fish visibly. In fact, one can *see* the motion of the fish till it reaches the stomach.

"Dangerous to feed him in that manner? Well, I must take the risk if I wish to keep him tame, and make him remember that he gets no food except from my hand. But the danger need not be fatal if I be very careful.

"Once I was actually bitten!

"Does the Heaven-born notice the mark on my thumb, no bigger than a large pin's head? Well, the cobra missed his aim, or I was a couple of inches too near; be that as it may, one fang fell on the fish, but the other on my thumb. I saw it coming, and released my hold instantly, so that the fang was in the wound *less than a second*. That saved my life.

"No, *the fang itself is not poisonous*. That is only a popular error. It is not coated with poison, in the manner of a poisoned arrow. Nor is it hollow, with a fine capillary tube within it, through which the poison is automatically injected into the wound in the mere act of biting. That also is a popular error, especially among Europeans. Other serpents have hollow fangs, but not the cobra. Otherwise, I should never have survived that bite. Besides, Nature is not so foolish; for then the cobra could not seize its food without also infecting it with the poison. I shall describe in full the real method of injecting the poison.

"The poison is contained in an almond-shaped gland or bag, situated behind each eye; a fine conduit pipe connects each gland with the *base* of the fang beneath it. As the glands are constantly secreting the poison there would soon be an overflow of it, by gravitation alone, into the mouth of the cobra, if the conduit pipes were kept open. To prevent this useless waste of the precious fluid, Nature has supplied the cobra with a sphincter muscle to bind each pipe about the middle; also with another muscle to squeeze each gland from the back.

"Thus when the cobra is roused to fury, and strikes at its foe, the fangs puncture two small holes upon the body of its prey; but that in itself is not sufficient; the poison has yet to be injected. Hence immediately after the fangs have made the wounds, the cobra quickly *turns* its head first to one side and then the other. *That act of turning indicates the injection of the poison.* For instance, supposing that the cobra turns first to the

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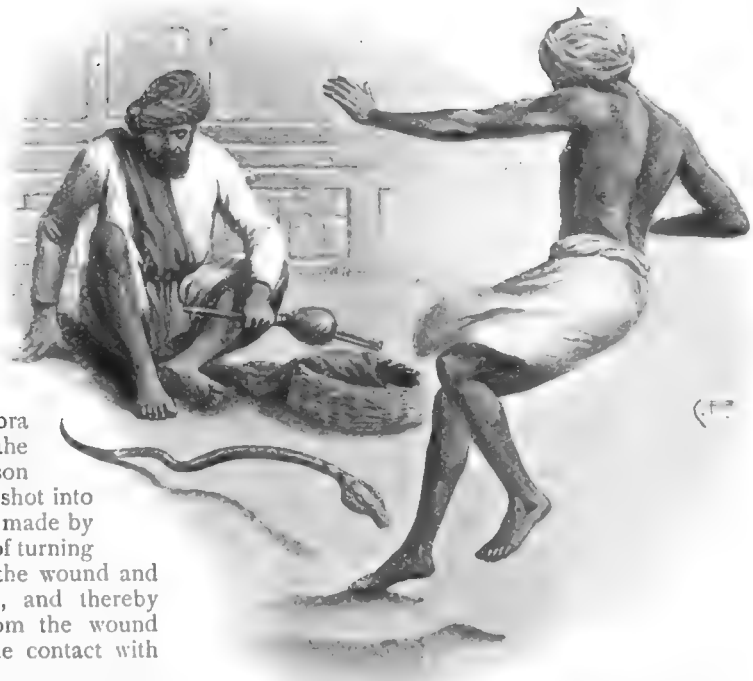
right, then that act coincides with a muscular effort by which the right sphincter muscle relaxes its hold on its conduit pipe, and simultaneously the right side gland is squeezed by the muscle behind it; and thus the poison is shot upon the victim's body *adjacent* to the wound.



"The blow fell not quite full and square upon his leg, but at the edge of it."

"Likewise, if the cobra has time to turn to the left also, then the poison from the left gland is shot into the side of the wound made by the left fang. The act of turning also serves to enlarge the wound and give it a jagged end, and thereby insures the blood from the wound coming into immediate contact with the poison.

"Thus when my Kala-Nag unintentionally bit me in seizing the fish, the fang was within the wound less than a second; and as the injection of the poison must be intentional, not accidental, I escaped with my life. In most cases it needs about a second after the bite for the injection of the poison; and even that short respite has saved many a life.

"An example: A foolish man, misjudging my apparent immunity after the accidental bite, thoughtlessly came too near rather suddenly. Kala-Nag launched forth at him instantly; but the aim was too hurried, or the man receded even slightly, and the blow fell not quite full and square upon his leg, but at the edge of it, so that the cobra's jaws slipped off by the mere impetus, and the fangs scratched along the skin in two thin lines; thus the poison was deposited about three inches from the wound, too far to do harm.

"So narrow an escape from fatal consequences after a bite is more frequent than is generally known. For even a foolish man never irritates a cobra intentionally, but only accidentally—when the cobra's aim is generally hurried, and the man may recoil even slightly to divert the aim effectively. Moreover, a cobra's range for striking is limited to about two-thirds of its length. For it needs a strong muscular effort to raise up even half its length in the air; add to that a trifle more for the impetus obtained by the lashing of the tail when the cobra has time to plunge *from the unfolding coil*, and we get the full range for its bite."

Here I must translate Moolraj's words into plain English. The action of the unfolding coil in increasing the range practically amounts to a "kick" of the tail. The hind part of the cobra is coiled round in two circles; then at the moment of striking the upper circle (the one nearer the tail) begins to unwind rapidly in the *opposite* direction to the coil, with the tail pressing hard on the ground. The effect of that action is to shoot forward the under coil, and thus increase the striking range by that amount.

"Has Kala-Nag been yet taught to bite wilfully, deliberately, with intention to kill? He has—forsooth for my own safety. As the poison is forming constantly, I had to watch his temper from moon to moon from the first day the fangs began to grow. Then in the third moon, when the fangs were ready to strike, I knew that the poison gland was also full; and, unless the pressure were soon relieved, the cobra would bite at anything—

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perhaps even me. So I got a stuffed mongoose.

"Now there is eternal and instinctive enmity between the cobra and the mongoose. The moment Kala-Nag saw his hereditary foe, as he thought it to be, he lashed out furiously; the mongoose did not respond, as a live one would have done; and my pet was very young then, and had no experience of the terrible danger of battling with a mongoose. So he launched out at the unresisting foe, and bit it thrice. Thus was his anger appeased, and likewise the poison discharged. And thus every month since then I have discharged the superfluous poison for my own safety! There is indeed a constant supply in the gland for immediate use. I only relieve the increasing pressure.

"Yes, he has just had his bite for this month! At least, the poison has been discharged at a man—happily without fatal consequences. I shall explain. I know an English sahib who wished to try an experiment with my pet. He had read vague accounts in books about the effect of music, good and bad, upon the cobra; but he was disbelieving. So he wished to try his violin-playing on Kala-Nag.

"The delighted cobra stood erect, with half his length in the air, and responded to the music by swaying his body gracefully from side to side, and even beat time with his tail; thus at the first music, a lively march. At a *ragini* (rhapsody) the swaying stopped, and instead his uplifted form quivered with intense passion; his hood expanded to the fullest, his eyes glistened with fierce pleasure. Then, at a soothing melody, a soft lullaby, the hood contracted, the eyes almost closed, and the body bent lower and lower to the ground as if in coming slumber. Thus as the music changed, Kala-Nag's demeanour did likewise.

"But suddenly, when the coil was once more in the air, the musician drew his bow across several strings of the violin simultaneously, in the most horrible discord; he did that wilfully, several times, with a short, sharp jerk each time. At first Kala-Nag looked up as if in astonishment, then writhed in pain, then lashed out at the musician in mad fury.

"Now I have said before that the cobra usually injects the poison about a second after the bite. When, however, its anger is great, its determination to kill may cause the injection of the poison to occur almost simultaneously with the insertion of the fangs. But in this case, because the musician had in a sense tantalised and then cheated the cobra, Kala-Nag's fury was so intense that by a strong muscular effort he squirted out the poison *while still in the act of plunging through the air*.

"Happily the sahib was really out of range of the fangs, but the poison was shot upon his clothes a full yard away. After that he believed in the influence of music upon the cobra; good music—and bad!

"Have I myself been ever in real danger of death from Kala-Nag? Not once, but several times! I shall tell the Heaven-born; but one instance will suffice. I have already described how I have reared him from his early infancy, and the anxiety and care I have taken when he was attaining the fangs of his full cobrahood.

"Now I shall describe the peril that came a while later, when in the ordinary course of nature he would have been roaming the fields in search of a mate. But, being in captivity, he grew restless. I had to let out the poison more frequently, but his temper grew nevertheless. I might have taken him to the fields, released him, and trusted to Fate to recover him afterwards; but just at that time I was stricken with fever, and had to lie impotent on my *charpoy*.

"Kala-Nag I kept in a basket. I thought him safe there, and was more afraid of some wandering cobra outside coming in uninvited. So I had to resort to the extreme precaution of placing a rope on the ground around the house—which I would have scorned to do had not my body and mind been enfeebled by sickness. The rope was really a stout hawser made of coarse cocoanut fibre. I knew that no cobra would voluntarily cross that magic circle; for the coarse fibre would hurt it too much; moreover, the rope would vaguely suggest to the suspicious creature a large and unknown type of its own serpent tribe! Thus in seeming safety I lay upon my sick bed.

"Then one afternoon, when I had fallen asleep, I woke up with a sudden but vague sense of something pressing against my ankle. In the transition from sleep to wakefulness it took me some little time to understand my condition; thus it was a full half minute later that I realised that a serpent was crawling up my leg!

"In usual health I might have acted differently; but in sickness my nerves were weak. Thus, almost instinctively, I made a feeble movement to pull up my leg. Immediately I heard a slight hiss—and put back my leg. I understood

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"The lower part of the serpent's body was still coiling up along the leg of the bed, and only the upper part was wound round my ankle; thus even the slight movement I had made must have stretched the serpent's body, and caused it a little pain. Any strange serpent would have bitten me on the instant; so I realised that it was Kala-Nag who was crawling up my leg. I might have known that had I thought of the rope outside.

"But his temper was up; at least, I had grown timorous in sickness. I tortured my brain to devise some plan of escape. Almost in despair, being powerless to move, I began to whistle softly one of Kala-Nag's favourite airs. But the attempt was feeble; Kala-Nag merely paused a moment, then continued coiling up.

"Fortunately, however, a comrade who had come to tend me happened to be near. Being also a serpent-charmer, and in full health, he was on the alert; and the whistling of a serpent melody was a recognised signal among the brethren of imminent peril.

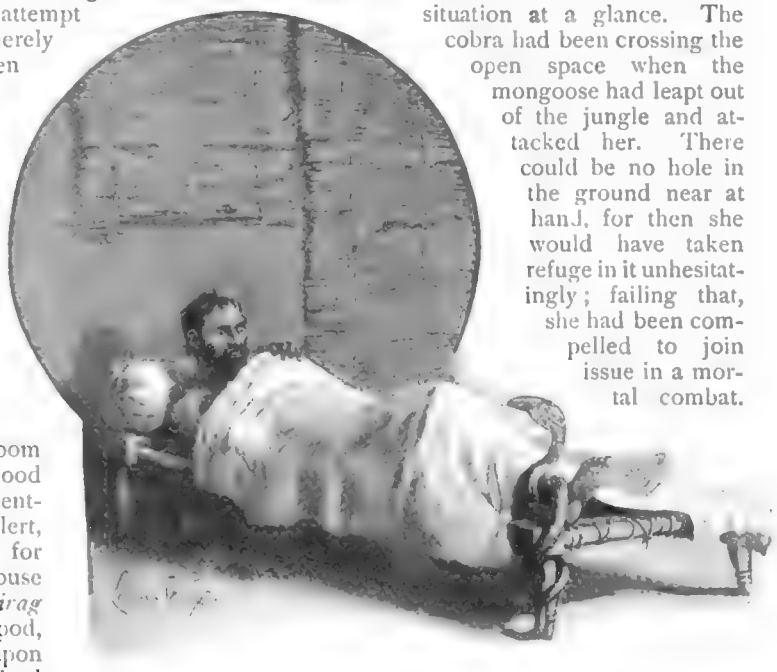
"He came to the room cautiously, and understood at a glance. Now a serpent-charmer is not only alert, but also prepared for emergencies; in his house there is always a *chirag* burning on a high tripod, with a tin-pot of milk upon it. My comrade seized the milk, poured it upon a dish, returned to my room, laid the dish beside the bed, and vanished.

"Kala-Nag paused; the smell of the hot milk assailed his nostrils; he raised his head and saw it. Without hesitation he simply dropped off my leg, and hastened to the milk. As quickly I arose, and left the room.

"Yes, when he had gorged himself, and was having the subsequent repose, I put him back into his basket, secured it fast, and made a solemn vow. Accordingly, a week after, when I had fully recovered, I took him to the fields in the basket. Even with my knowledge of jungle craft it took me three days to attain my purpose; the few cobras I had seen were males. But then, as if in reward, a wondrous sight met my gaze.

"It was a little clearing about fifty cubits across, and adjacent to a jungle. And in the middle of it I saw a cobra almost as big as Kala-Nag; a female as I afterwards knew. She stood erect with half her length in the air, her hood expanded to the fullest, her eyes flashing in impotent rage, her forked tongue darting in and out between angry hisses. For just out of her range, and barring her path, was a mongoose.

"Ten yards away behind a shrub I stooped and watched. I understood the situation at a glance. The cobra had been crossing the open space when the mongoose had leapt out of the jungle and attacked her. There could be no hole in the ground near at hand, for then she would have taken refuge in it unhesitatingly; failing that, she had been compelled to join issue in a mortal combat.



"I realised that a serpent was crawling up my leg!"

For the mongoose is always the aggressor, the cobra standing at bay through sheer compulsion. And the mongoose generally wins by the relentless laws of Nature. Thus:

"The cobra cannot keep its head on the ground, for then the mongoose would soon dance round it and leap upon it from the back. Thus the serpent is compelled to raise up its body in the air and face its foe in that manner, and also turn as swiftly as it can to guard against a rear attack. Now let a man try to hold up his outstretched arm vertically above his shoulder for ten or fifteen minutes; he simply could not do it. In like manner the cobra is unable to sustain half its body

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in the air by sheer muscular effort for any length of time. It must win or lose the combat within the time-limit of its endurance.

"In the battle I watched, the mongoose simply waited outside the cobra's range with its nose on the ground, its body lying low in a line behind, its eyes narrowed to two tiny points of light. But this seeming inactivity was in reality masterly tactics; had the cobra launched forth to strike, the mongoose would have leapt back instantly.

"Thus it sought to wear out the cobra's endurance first before it began its own movements. The cobra soon realised that and came to the attack. She oscillated her body to and fro, gave an angry hiss in the middle of a forward movement; the mongoose leapt back—but the cobra's motion was only a feint. She waited for the foe to resume its former position, then continued the oscillations.

"Suddenly she plunged forth full at the mongoose—in vain. The latter was too wary. It leapt back instantly, and the cobra measured her length on the ground, but recovered almost at once. Thrice she struck, and each time spent her force uselessly on the ground. She was tiring visibly.

"The mongoose was just waiting for that. It now came leaping round her, thus compelling her not only to hold herself up but also to turn as best she could. Seeing that the end was nigh, I crept out from behind the shrub with my hand on the lid of the basket. None too early.

"The cobra was in the middle of an oscillation when the mongoose suddenly sprang up on its hind legs; instantly the serpent shot out with open jaws, the mongoose swerved, and the cobra's wearied form lay a full second upon the ground. That was enough. The mongoose fell upon her head sideways, closed his teeth upon it, and fastened his forepaws on either side of it.

"I waited no more. I opened the lid of the basket and simply shot out Kala-Nag. He fell a yard behind the mongoose. He knew the game very well, having played it every month with the stuffed mongoose at home. He now buried his fangs upon the back of his natural enemy.

"The effect was magical. The mongoose released his prey, and simply jumped up in the air like a wild cat and vanished into the jungle, the action being so quick that Kala-Nag's head was jerked up by the leap, and he fell to the ground across the injured cobra's body. Knowing that there was no hole in the ground at hand for their escape, I let the two be together awhile, merely pouring some water upon the wounded cobra's head.

"She soon revived, but was too feeble to crawl. Then Kala-Nag showed her such sympathy as only a lover could. I watched from five yards away as he licked her head. Forsooth if serpents have a speech of their own, he talked to her most lovingly to comfort her. She was seriously injured. Had I not intervened just when I did—or, rather, if Kala-Nag had not come to her rescue—in five seconds more the mongoose would have firmly embedded the claws of his forepaws upon her head, would have drawn them asunder, and thus have severed her head in twain.

"As it was I could only hope to save her by Kala-Nag's solicitude, and subsequently by the remedies I knew, such as pounded neem-leaves mixed with cold water and spread over the wound. So when Kala-Nag had revived her sufficiently to be just able to move, I approached with the open basket and tilted it up before her. Perhaps it was the memory of the mongoose and the refuge she had longed for in vain; be that as it may, seeing in the basket the only asylum at hand she tried to crawl into it, and I worked the edge of it gently under her until she was in. Then Kala-Nag entered willingly. Thus I brought them home.

"No, I have not exactly tamed her. I left my case, as it were, in Kala-Nag's hands, trusting that he would succeed in persuading her, even by example, to be friendly to the master who had reared him and fed him. And to some extent he has succeeded, for if a cobra's hate be great its love is greater. Seeing that Kala-Nag takes the fish from my hand, she has so far overcome her natural suspicion as to allow me to come within arm's length and then *throw* the fish at her. So some day I may yet hope to tame her so well that she will feed from the one hand, while Kala-Nag does from the other—which taming of a full-grown fanged cobra will be a triumph indeed.

"Even now she is responsive to his love and example, for Kala-Nag is a devoted husband. And when she rears her brood his care for her will increase yet more. Thus unto the end will he serve her; and when she is in the throes of death, if she be too feeble to act herself, he will bite her and thus release her from pain. And then in his own death agony he will turn upon himself in his

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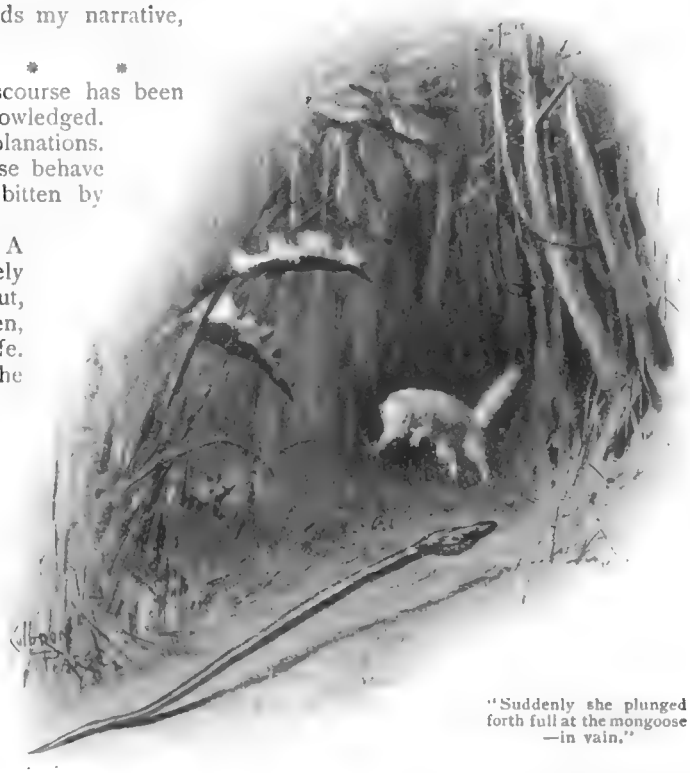
last, ebbing strength and bite himself to hasten his death. Thus ends my narrative, Heaven-born."

* * * * *

"Truly, Moolraj, thy discourse has been most fascinating," I acknowledged. "But now give me a few explanations. First, why did the mongoose behave so strangely after being bitten by Kala-Nag?"

"Strangely, yet wisely. A mongoose will instinctively attack any cobra it sees; but, if by any chance it be bitten, it must look to its own life. It is not immune from the peril of the cobra's poison, as popularly supposed; hence all the greater its courage in always attacking a cobra. If bitten, it will quickly die like any other warm-blooded animal.



"Suddenly she plunged forth full at the mongoose—in vain."

"But there is a general belief among serpent-charmers that the mongoose knows a remedy for cobra-poison—some root or herb—which is still undiscovered by man. Hence, if bitten by a cobra, it will immediately run to the jungle without loss of time and apply that remedy. Attempts have been made to follow the mongoose into the jungle to discover the substance it uses, but so far in vain, for it is too quick for man to follow."

"Enough, Moolraj. But one last question: In India 21,000 people die every year from the bite of the cobra; *but very few English people.* Why their comparative immunity?"

"Because they wear clothes and shoes. Of the 21,000 who die, the vast majority are poor people whose limbs are uncovered and feet bare. A cobra's striking range is less than a yard and a half; so that even if it aims as high as the knee, the fangs may really fall no higher than the foot or the ankle, namely, at the furthest limit of the curve described by the extended part of its body. The fangs would rather break off than penetrate ordinary shoe-leather.

"Even if the blow falls higher than the foot, the fangs would indeed pierce through the clothes, puncture the body, and thus open a possible communication with the blood; but even then the poison would be injected *outside* the clothes, and the thinnest piece of cloth is sufficiently elastic to close round the fang, and allow no open space for the adjacent poison to pass through. Undoubtedly the poison may in a few seconds *soak through* the cloth, and thus reach the wound; but if the person bitten immediately raises the dress a few inches he should suffer little injury."

"So English residents are practically immune," I commented. "As for English visitors, who come to India only for the winter, they seldom even see a cobra! Is not that so, Moolraj?"

"Truly, Heaven-born. For in winter the cobra sleeps." To translate Moolraj's words into popular English terms, the cobra is inactive at a temperature lower than 75 degrees, and lethargic at 50 degrees; and the winter shade temperature of India, except in the extreme south, fluctuates between 75 degrees and 50 degrees between day and night, with a tendency in parts to drop to freezing point after midnight.

"Yet, Moolraj, there are English people, residents and visitors, who legitimately fear that a cobra might come into their bungalow

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at night; for such things have happened. What remedy have they?"

"Let them try the rope trick! Yes, a mere hawser of coarse cocoanut fibre placed on the ground around the house. And there still remains the strong-smelling acid!"

Let me explain Moolraj's words. Even as the cobra loves music, it hates carbolic acid, the common household disinfectant—nay, even the ordinary coal-tar soap. I once heard of a wondrous adventure with a cobra that had entered an English resident's bungalow in the hot weather, and had coiled itself inside the wash-basin. Well, a cake of coal-tar soap in the dish alongside would have scared away the intruder.

As for the carbolic acid, a few drops of it injected into the body of a cobra will kill it as quickly as cobra poison will kill a man. The cobra flees from the very smell of carbolic acid. So a few drops of it sprinkled on any hole or orifice by which it can enter will effectually bar it out. And if the hawser be used as well, a few drops sprinkled along its length will cause the intruding cobra to flee to the next parish in disgust. Carbolic acid renders man immune from the serpent's wiles, and a supply of it in the Garden of Eden might have altered the very fate of mankind.

Seriously, I have only one modification to make in Moolraj's narrative—his anticipation of the manner in which Kala-Nag and its mate will die is somewhat romantic. Cobra poison is undoubtedly fatal to all warm-blooded animals, and even to non-venomous reptiles.

But if one cobra be bitten by another, or by itself, it will not die if in the full vigour of life; for then it will be able to throw off the evil effects, and suffer only a temporary discomfort. Nevertheless, if the cobra bitten be already approaching its death agony, consequently if its vitality be at a low ebb, then the bite *may* be fatal—at least, may hasten the end.

"So, when Kala-Nag's mate is dead," Moolraj added; "and his own end is nigh, he will turn and bite himself to death. Will the poison itself be weak because he himself would then be feeble? Why should it be, if it has been secreted in the gland in a state of health? For the poison will maintain its virulence, if unused, for months, even years."

Thus the belief of Indian serpent-charmers in the cobra's romantic end *may* be true, and their hereditary experience of countless years find a corroboration in this material age.

HIS HOUSE IN ORDER.

I view my study with despair
And many a heartfelt sigh;
My pens I can't find anywhere
No matter how I try;
Where are my slippers? Where the cap
That hides my shining pate?
They all seemed wiped clean off the map
Since Cynthia "put things straight."

What means that unfamiliar text
Upon my study wall?
Where are the hairpins I annexed
To clean my pipe withal?
And where the spud I used as a
Penwiper-paperweight?
Alas, likewise alackaday!
My Cynthia's "put things straight"!

Sometimes she says I'm "hopeless," then
She leaves my room alone,
And I keep my beloved den
In manner all my own.
Then I can find my things, despite
Their sad chaotic state,
A feat that's now beyond me quite
Since Cynthia "put things straight"!

Stuart Furniss.

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MY MUSICAL EVENING

The Story of a Dinner and Entertainment.

By Fox Russell.

I have always been more or less fond of music, but have never experienced the wild joy of being received into the collective bosom of a musical family until—but I am getting too far ahead.

Toodlecombe, who is a member of my club, and with whom I have had a nodding acquaintance for some considerable time, asked me one day:

"Do you like music?"

He called it "mee-usic"; but no matter.

I replied indifferently that I could stand music as well as most people.

"Would you like to run down to our place—it's only forty minutes from town—dine with us, and spend a mee-usical evening?" he continued.

"Delighted," I rejoined politely—"some day," I added as a "saver."

"That's right. Then s'pose we fix Monday next."

I was not quite prepared for this, as I had not the remotest intention of accepting Toodlecombe's invitation—so I hedged a bit.

"Er—ah—thanks awfully, and all that, and so forth, but the fact is, I——" and here, being an unskilled liar, I fairly stuck.

Toodlecombe, who is one of the men who take no denial, at once struck in:

"Then name your own day, my dear sir—name your own day; it really doesn't matter to us. I live at home with my brothers and sisters and the Old Man, and any night that suits you, suits us."

Now I ask, is it fair to corner a man like this? I *couldn't* say I was engaged every night for the rest of my natural life, so was forced into fixing a date.

"Well, then—thanks awfully"—(those words were, I fear, uttered in a weak and vacillating tone, and lacked heartiness)—"er—I think I'll say Saturday, eh?"

When Toodlecombe, after fully directing me how to find his house, bade me "Good-night," he shook hands, and uttered these words—they sounded to me suggestive of a Cassandra-like warning:

"That's right. *We'll give you a treat.*"

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They did. The evening at length arrived, and, resolutely turning my back on civilisation, I took the train for Bricksbury-on-Clay.

There was a dense fog down the line, and we were considerably delayed—the rate of progression averaging about four miles an hour, and the journey being freely punctuated with the "Pop, pop!" of the detonators placed on the metals—a bitter frost added its quota to the sum of my discomfort, and when at length the train crawled alongside the platform of Bricksbury, I was almost frozen to death besides being choked with the thick, blinding fog. The train was nearly an hour late.

I coughed the fog out of my throat, gave up my ticket, and, turning to the left as soon as I got out of the station—acting under my friend's instructions—set out resolutely to tramp the short distance to the *maison* Toodlecombe.

"You can't miss it," my musical friend had said; "keep bearing to the left; it's less than half-a-mile from the station."

So I kept bearing to the left; *i.e.*, I took every left-hand turn I found, and got on capitally—until suddenly, and without any warning, I trudged cheerily into the middle of a half-frozen duck-pond.

Then I made observations on the sanity of people who seek to give directions, and give them wrongly. Had Toodlecombe been there I should have expostulated with my umbrella.

Fortunately I got in no deeper than up to my knees—and I retraced my steps hurriedly, and with certain cursory observations.

Evidently Toodlecombe had directed me carelessly, so I set about returning up the same road as I had come by, and after a sharp ten minutes' walk I saw a house looming out of the fog, which instinct told me must be the one I sought. I knocked at the door, which was opened, after some delay, by a tousle-headed servant, who asked suspiciously if I was "the Rates"?

I said, "No—not as far as I knew," and then asked if this was the Toodlecombes'.

"Oh, no—this ain't Toodlecombes'—nowhere near it—oh, no, you've come quite the wrong way—*that's* your way. You must have turned round, and walked the same road back again—you're almost at the railway station."

Which fact did not tend to improve my temper. I started off on my wanderings again, and running into—literally speaking—a friendly policeman, I obtained such information as led me, twenty minutes later, to the more or less ancestral home of the Toodlecombes.

"So glad to see you, my dear Townley," exclaimed my host, genially wringing my hand—I should have preferred his wringing my socks and trouser-legs—"I suppose you've been delayed by the fog, like Professor von Earsplitzen, who came by your train, and has only just arrived. He walked into a ditch——"

"And I into a duck-pond!" I interrupted somewhat acidly. "The roads of this salubrious town are hardly lighted sufficiently to cope with a peasoup fog."

"Well, never mind; dinner's just ready, and we'll have a long evening's music"—(he again pronounced it "mee—usic")—"afterwards. You've got here safely, so all your troubles are ended."

I doubted this.

Then I was ushered into a room considerably overfilled with vases, palm-leaf fans, alleged old china, small tables, which would hardly have supported the weight of a solitary teacup, painted (Aspinall's enamel and home-made artists) milking-stools, and multi-coloured mats. "And on the mat, I slipped and sat"—(forgive the lapse into verse; it shall not occur again).

Before I could regain my feet I was introduced to the three Misses Toodlecombe, all *d'un certain âge*, and all, as I afterwards found to my cost, "mee—usical."

After I had risen to my feet and blushingly bowed, knocking over one of the ricketty tables with my coat-tails as I did so, I was introduced to Professor von Earsplitzen, a large-sized, long-haired specimen, obviously "made in Germany," and to "Bob" Toodlecombe, my host's brother, an honest trier on the trombone. Then to the Old Man—evidently as an afterthought. I will at once say that old man Toodlecombe was not nice. He kept up a running fire of grunts and groans, wheezings and sighings, calculated to make those condemned to be of his immediate *entourage* contemplate with becoming resignation the idea of assisting in his early transfer to the cold graveyard. I, personally, could have taken the news of papa Toodlecombe's "passing" with a holy calm.

Then we went in to dinner, which proved to be not dinner at all, but a sort of glorified tea.

The Professor tucked his napkin under his chin, and wreathed it gracefully around him, as he prepared to attack the dish of poached eggs and bacon.

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"*Ach*," he said, addressing me, "dis fock, it ees zo thick ass I swallow 'im down yes, *donnerwetter* — I 'ave gom by ze zame drain ass you vrom town. Yes—no—is it not?"

I bowed, and then in silent wonder watched the huge Teuton deftly balance a poached egg on his knife and thereafter consume it with enjoyment.

"What will you drink?" asked Georgina, the eldest daughter, smiling sweetly at me.

"What he can get," grunted the Old Man audibly. Henrietta frowned scathingly in his direction, and the O. M. "dried up."

In reply to Georgina, I was about to say "claret," when it suddenly dawned upon me that tea and coffee were alone available. I chose the latter, I don't know on what grounds, but these (the grounds, I mean) were perfectly apparent as soon as I tackled the mixture of food and drink.

"Mr Townley, do you know von Trauser-stretchäus' Scherzo?"

Beyond the eggs and bacon, most of which the Professor managed to get outside, buns seemed to be the staple food of all Bricksburians—buns of the Bath, buns of the rice, buns of the plum, and buns of the plain order. I have never been to a Bun Show, but doubt if you would see this indigenous product in any greater profusion than we had it, *chez* Toodlecombe, that evening.

At last we rose from the table, and full of buns—beans, I should say—drifted, in an inflated kind of manner, into the room of palm-leaf fans again. This time I carefully avoided that mat.

The Old Man wheezed his way through the rest and sat himself down beside me. It was an honour—I felt that—but I had no wish to emulate Malvolio and have greatness thrust upon me, at all events, in this particular form.

Again turning on her sweet smile—I am sure that smile has been in the family for years—Georgina said to me:

"Mr. Townley, do you know von Trauser-stretchäus' Scherzo in——"

"Georgina," wheezed the terrible Old Man, interrupting her, "wish you'd get a new piece now and again! You've been playing that for the last twenty years——"

Then Toodlecombe thought it high time to interfere and suppress his parent.

"Now, look here, gov'nor," he said, firmly

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"Been gone a 'arf hour or more," was the surly reply.

but kindly, "Mr. Townley has come down here for mee-usic—you don't like it, we know. But you'll find your pipe in the next room—and here's the key of the sideboard."

This last proved a most effective bait, and the Old Man, still grunting and wheezing, rose and waddled off. We saw him no more.

I kept my sorrow within reasonable bounds. I felt that a little "Old Man" went a considerable distance. I had absolutely no use for Papa Toodlecombe.

"This Scherzo is a lovely thing," resumed Georgina, grabbing a bow and preparing to assault a violoncello, whilst Henrietta advanced with determined air upon the piano.

"*Ach*, id ist loafley," corroborated the Professor, blowing his nose soulfully. "Und id ist gomposed by a grantfater of mein own."

The Professor, with a preliminary tap on the back of his violin, looked round to see that piano, violoncello, and viola were ready, then he gave the signal to begin. The Brothers Toodlecombe, on brass instruments, were to throw in an outrage on cornet and trombone respectively as the piece progressed.

But the question I had to ask myself after forty minutes or so of hard, perspiring work for the instrumentalists, was: "*Was* it progressing?" Each "movement" seemed a little longer than the last. But I was helpless—resistance was useless. Why, oh why couldn't they work off the rest of it before an Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb?

When they eventually finished I was within measurable distance of lunacy. In fact, I was wondering vaguely how I should look wearing straws in my hair.

I thanked them all and rose, saying that, although with great regret, I must really go now, as my train back to town——

But that bald-headed miscreant "Bob" immediately struck in:

"Oh you need not trouble, Mr. Townley. There's no train now till the last—12.10—and it's much too soon to go for that."

I resumed my seat and murmured "Thank you." I also muttered to myself, "D—ear me."

Then Georgina sang. It is curious, but absolutely true, that musical people are, to a large extent, divided into those who can sing and won't and those who can't sing and do—

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Georgina must, I fear, be placed amongst the latter class.

Her voice itself was—well, I have heard worse voices (but not much). But time and tune wait for no man—or is it time and tide? Well, it really doesn't much matter; it is equally true in either case. And as to her execution—half way through the song, I made up my mind that this was a thing much to be desired—at an early date and without benefit of clergy!

Von Earsplitzen then sang—or, more correctly speaking, roared—lyrically informing us that his "*herz*" was beating only in connection with his "*schmerz*." Other useful information was afforded in the succeeding verses, and finally, with one long, last, dismal howl, he stopped.

We applauded as in duty bound, and then I saw "Bob" furtively fingering his trombone.

"Er——" I began, "you don't propose to—to—you are not a soloist on this weapon?"

"Well," he answered rather diffidently (I hoped I had touched his heart and awakened a better feeling within him), "I *do* have a shot now and then at 'The Battle of the Prague,' but I don't know if *you'd* like it."

"My dear sir," I said solemnly—mind you, I *felt* solemn when I calculated my chances of escape—"every man has his price—mine is 'The Battle of the Prague,' rendered by a brilliant exponent such as I am sure you are on the trombone. But I really must be getting off to the station."

"Sure you wouldn't like a shakedown here?" struck in Toodlecombe. "The Professor's not going back in the fog—we are putting him up for the night, and we should be delighted if——"

"Thanks awfully and so forth," I gasped fearfully—I had a sort of wild idea that this musical family might really *make* me stop—"but I absolutely *must* get off. You see I have nothing with me, so couldn't possibly stop."

"Well, no more has the Professor, but he——"

"Ah quite so, quite so—but I daresay he has brought *the* other collar and—and—no, really thanks, I must go—afraid I'm rather late in starting already. Good-bye, *good-bye!* I don't know when I've spent such an evening as this; it is quite out of the common—absolutely unique—yes, thanks, this is my coat. Oh, the fog's cleared off now—hooray!"

And I rushed off down the steps and started walking briskly to the station, thanking my lucky star that I had got through that "mee-usical" evening alive.

Forty-five minutes and I should be back in town; ten minutes later in my club; then to satisfy the aching void created by the sketchy nature of my bun-tea-dinner, and—why, what on earth's the matter? A sleepy porter shutting up the station doors——?

"What the—why the—how the—where's the last train, porter?" I cried in blank amazement.

"Been gone a 'arf hour or more," was the surly reply.

"But the 12.10, my good man?"

"Mondays only," he quoted, shutting the last door to with a slam.

So I went back and stayed the night with the Toodlecombes.

THE WRONG WAY.

I walked one day to meet my love
Beneath the waving trees;
How restful was the grateful shade,
How cooling was the breeze.
The songs of birds filled all my heart
With joyous music mete;
For was not I upon my way
My own dear love to greet?

I could have gone along the road,
Had I so wished to do;
But as the road lay in full sun
It would be hot, I knew;
Without a doubt, my lady would
The dusty road refuse;
And would decide, as I had done,
The shady woods to choose.

Mile after mile I strolled along,
And still she did not come,
Until at last I found myself
Before my darling's home;
And there I heard the dreadful news
That filled me with dismay;
While I had journeyed through the woods,
She went the other way.

Herbert J. Brandon.

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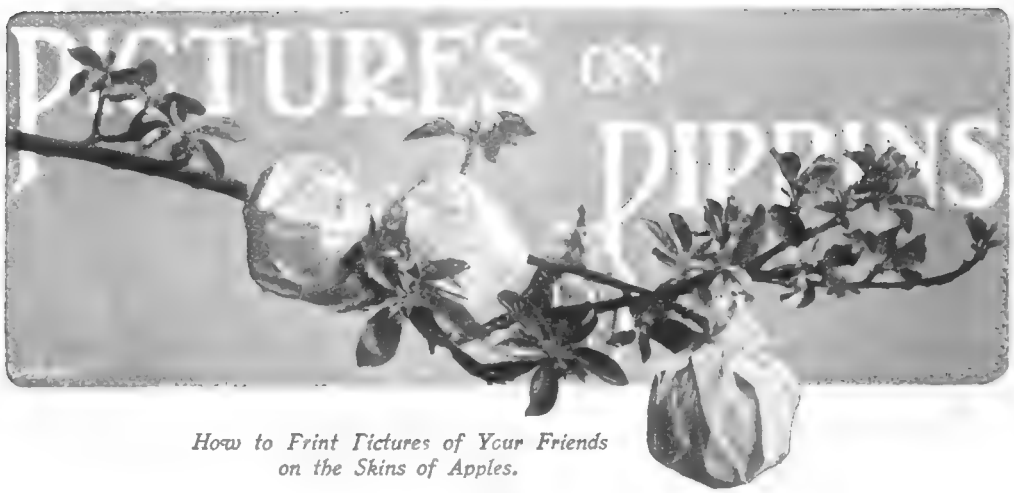

How to Print Pictures of Your Friends on the Skins of Apples.

By S. Leonard Bastin.

There was quite a little flutter at Covent Garden when it was announced that a box of apples had arrived from France, each bearing upon its ruddy cheek an excellent portrait of His Majesty the King. Competition was keen amongst buyers, anxious to secure the great novelty; and it is on record that the fruit changed hands at the substantial rate of £5 for the half dozen. Since then the art of apple-stencilling has been adopted by a number of Continental growers, who, realising that herein was a valuable means of adding to their profits, have not been slow to adopt the original suggestion.

It must be admitted there is a great fascination in doing a thing for oneself, and on this ground it is far more interesting, and incidentally much less expensive, to produce stencilled apples than to purchase the fruit at a shop.

Almost any variety of apple is suitable for the purpose of stencilling, provided the fruit, when ripe, turns a rosy colour. Kinds which produce a good-sized apple will be found to be the most effective, especially if they have a clear, shiny skin. When the fruit has attained to a fair size, and is as yet perfectly green, is the right time to commence operations. The specimens selected for the purpose of stencilling should be nicely shaped, perfect examples, well towards the outside of the tree, where they will be likely to benefit to the full from the sun's rays. The number which it has been decided to treat should be fixed upon, and it may be mentioned that some extra ones should be allowed for failures, and each apple must be carefully tied up in a paper bag. Of course the covering should be of sufficient size to allow of growth on the part of the fruit.

After having sketched the required design on thin paper, using as few lines as possible, cut out the chief lines and markings so as to make a stencil.

As soon as the apple is completely grown the bag may be removed, and it will be noticed that the fruit is of a particularly pleasant pale green colour. As no delay is advisable between the uncovering of the apple and the placing of

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the stencil, it is desirable that whilst the fruit is growing the designs should be prepared. It has been found that the stencils are best cut out of thin white paper.

For those who are fairly skilful with a pencil, it will be an easy matter to sketch out some trifling design of the right size upon a piece of paper, drawing a strong outline, and for the interior, only putting in the most salient points. But it is not such a simple affair to put on to paper even a rough portrait which shall at the same time convey a reasonable likeness of the person whom it is intended to delineate. Under these circumstances, by far the best way is to obtain a photograph of the individual it is desired to portray, place a small sheet of thin paper over the picture, and with a pencil lightly trace the outline, and a few of the characteristic portions

The next step is to stick the stencil on to the fruit. For this nothing is better than good starch paste. See that all the paper, including the edges, adheres well

When the cheek of the apple has become as crimson as may be expected, sponge and gently remove the stencil

of the features. It is surprising how very few lines are necessary to indicate a very passable resemblance to the portrait. Now with a pair of scissors cut the design round the edge, endeavouring to get a nice, clean border. Spread the scrap of paper out on to a smooth piece of board, and with a very sharp knife cut out the chief lines and markings so as to make a stencil. When you are satisfied that what would print through the perforations will give a fair likeness, the design may be considered to be ready for removal to the apple.

The next step will be to stick the stencil on to the side of the fruit and although many adhesives have been recommended there is probably nothing better for the purpose than good starch paste. There is little fear that this will make the apple

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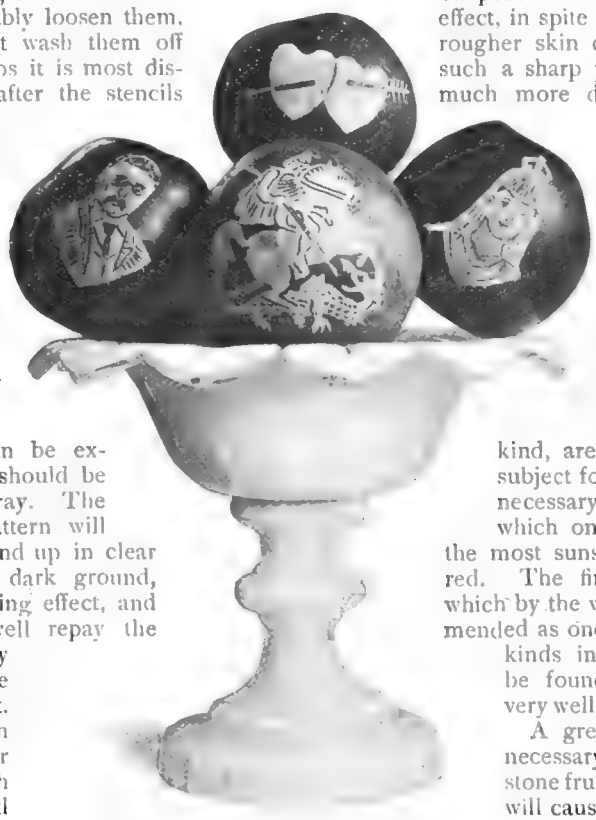
taste, and it is very tenacious. As a rule, apples do not ripen a uniformly red tint all over, and for affixing the stencil the cheek of the fruit which it is known will get the most sunshine should be chosen. See that the whole of the paper is well adhering even to the edges, and then wait in hope that the next week or so will be blessed with fine, clear weather.

Portraits of their Majesties the King and Queen are very favourite designs for apple stencils.

Of course, a heavy shower of rain immediately after putting the stencils into position will probably loosen them, even if it does not wash them off altogether. Perhaps it is most disappointing when, after the stencils have been on some days, they get washed off, leaving a half-finished imprint. But with good luck a considerable number of the stencils will have retained their position, and when it is judged that the cheek of the apple has become as crimson as can be expected, the design should be gently sponged away. The imprint of the pattern will then be seen to stand up in clear relief against the dark ground, giving a most striking effect, and one which will well repay the gardener for any trouble to which he may have been put.

As has been hinted, the number of designs which might be worked out in stencil fashion is simply legion, and is dependent solely upon the taste of the individual. Coats-of-arms and various crests are often very attractive, and what could be more charming than the symbolic design representing the two lovers' hearts pierced by the arrow of Cupid!



Hearts pierced by Cupid's arrow, St. George and the Dragon, and portraits of celebrities, also make attractive designs.

The stencilling of fruit, although it is most successfully accomplished on apples, need not by any means be confined to them. It has also been carried out on peaches with a good deal of effect, in spite of the fact that the rougher skin does not allow of such a sharp picture. It is also much more difficult to get the stencil to adhere to the surface in the case of this fruit.

Nectarines, on account of the smoother nature of their rind, would be likely to answer the purpose in better style. Plums, if one is careful to choose the right kind, are an equally good subject for stencilling. It is necessary to select a sort which on the side receiving the most sunshine turns a good red. The fine Victoria plum, which by the way may be recommended as one of the best eating kinds in the world, would be found to take stencils very well.

A great deal of care is necessary in handling soft stone fruits, as a small bruise will cause a brown spot, and thus spoil the appearance of the specimen.

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The WOOING of SIGRÜNA

A Viking Love Story

By E. R. Suffling

How Halfdan, Son of Kraki of Reikt ald, in Iceland, Won his Bride.

In the days when Harold Gormsson ruled over Denmark, Sigrüna the Fair dwelt in Gautland, where her father was a *bondi* (landowner and viking). She had two brothers, named Starkad and Helgi, who were both very fond of their beautiful sister, never suffering her to soil her hands with menial labour, although her mother, Alètha, was dead. Serfs and thralls were numerous on the domain. Therefore Sigrüna ordered and they obeyed, cheerfully performing the various tasks allotted to them.

Now, Heimdal, the father, could not follow any active occupation by reason of a wound he had received during an expedition to the land of the Angles; he had been so sorely wounded by a spear-thrust in the loins that he could not stand upright, and in walking bore heavily upon his strong oak staff.

When Sigrüna the Fair was eighteen years of age a terrible storm visited the coast, and a number of tall ships were lost with many of their crews; among the vessels being a "long-ship" called *Fylgja-Kona* (the guardian spirit), which was wrecked on the foreshore of her father's demesne, and all save a few of those aboard her perished.

Among those who were thrown ashore amidst the wreckage of the doomed vessel, was a young Icelander named Halfdan (the black), a youth standing nearly a head above any of the Danes, and who was very handsome both in person and feature.

In those days flotsam and jetsam, whether merchandise or human being, belonged to the landowner upon whose property they were cast. The common men of the crew were, therefore, put as serfs to labour on the land; but Halfdan, from his superior bearing, was made a house-carl, a domestic servant, until one day he signified his intention of paying a ransom during the following spring, upon which his thraldom was removed, and he became a guest, a member of the family, as was the custom. By his gentle manners and noble bearing he soon won the affection of all the members of the household.

Sigrüna, winsome maiden, in due time became enamoured of him, but said no word nor gave any sign of her love, only longing in her heart to become the bride of the stalwart, comely Icelander.

Love, like a light, is difficult to hide, and soon her father saw the light of love in her eyes when the stranger was present; so, too, did her brothers, Helgi and Starkad; whereupon the three held council as to how they might best act in the matter.

"Who knows aught of this smiling Icelander?" said Starkad, "for all we know he may be an outlaw, a *nithing!*"

"But, my son," argued old Heimdal, "he bears him well, and hath a very noble countenance; still, as you say, he may be a *nithing!*"

"Put him away from Sigrüna, O my father, until his promised ransom comes with the spring," counselled Helgi; "then shall we know of a verity if he be fitted for our beloved sister."

After this council Halfdan was sent to a small farm at a distance; yet did it not prevent him from meeting Sigrüna surreptitiously upon the shore, for he, being a free man, wandered whithersoever he listed, while she, watching the movements and profiting by the absence of her brothers and father, met her lover on sundry occasions, albeit the wintry winds blew very keen and cold along the rocky strand.

One morning, towards springtime, did Halfdan come to the home of Heimdal to

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demand of him the hand of Sigrüna the Fair in marriage.

The old man called to him his two sons to consider the matter in private, for a matter of such import could not be arranged offhand, like the selling of a calf, and after long council they returned to the great hall, where Heimdal addressed Halfdan in this wise:

"Halfdan, I would willingly call thee my son could I with a serene conscience do so, but thou givest me no proof that thou art verily the son of Kraki of Iceland, neither art thou known to any man in this land. Thy form is that of one of good birth, and thy manners are befitting the son of Kraki of Reikvald; thy speech, too, is gentle, and thou canst even write, and singest a right good saga, yet can I not yield to thee my daughter till such time as thou provest thyself."

Halfdan was disappointed, and did straightway send round an arrow to all the neighbouring Bœndr, calling upon them to meet him at the Thing (council hall).

When every man had assembled he spoke to them of his great love for Sigrüna the Fair, proclaiming himself to be the eldest son of Kraki of Reikvald, in Iceland, of whom all present had heard, because of his great prowess, and several had seen during their rovings to the far island.

Then did the Bœndr take council together, yet could they not sanction the union of the lovers, for without proof of his birth Halfdan was an unknown, a Berserk certainly, but—a wanderer.

Halfdan, breathing hard, then stepped forth into the midst of the Bœndr, and with upraised hand challenged the brothers, Helgi and Starkad, to meet him in *holmganga* (trial by battle).

By the custom of the country there was no gainsaying such an appeal. A day, time, and place were accordingly set by the assembly for the champions to meet to give Halfdan an opportunity of winning the hand of Sigrüna in mortal combat.

Down in the valley which divided Heimdal's land from that of his neighbour Torkettel, ran a little river, the Rut, which as it neared the sea branched into two parts, running round the sides of a little island no larger than the threshing floor of a barn. Here was fought many a *holmganga*, except in flood time, when the river became so swollen as to bury the islet beneath its turbulent waters. At such times the duels took place in a *smee* or meadow, but upon the turf whether of island or *smee* was spread a cloak ten feet square, and at each corner a pole was thrust into the ground four feet from the actual corner of the cloak. This was the "ring" of those times.

Now, *holmganga* rules were severe, and briefly were these:

He who stepped with one foot outside the *hoslur* (hazel rods) should be held to have retreated, whilst if he stepped or was forced with both feet without the boundary he was held to have fled, and was at once acclaimed by those assembled a *nithing*—a coward, and at once lost the battle. A wounded man, being rendered helpless and at the mercy of his opponent, could signify the acceptance of his defeat, and by paying an indemnity of six marks (a large sum in those days) save his life, and that without losing his manly qualities, or suffering reproach for cowardice at the hands of his neighbours.

* * * * *

On the morning of the *holmganga*, the population of the whole neighbourhood lined the banks of the river to witness the combat between Sigrüna's brothers and the stalwart Icelander.

In due time appeared the burly form of Heimdal leaning upon the arm of his daughter; next came Helgi and Starkad, attended by numerous kinsmen and friends, and the principal thralls; whilst last, with proud mien and confident bearing, came Halfdan, his long, black locks sweeping his broad shoulders and tossing in the wind.

Barefooted and barelegged, his only garment was a white tunic or linen *serk* (shirt), reaching to the knee, whilst over it was drawn a loose-fitting *brynja* or coat of mail which covered him but to mid-thigh, as it had been lent him by his opponent Helgi, who was much less in stature though powerfully built.

Helgi and Starkad were similarly dressed, and all three wore helmets of plaited, polished steel. The weapons were straight-bladed, two-edged swords of wonderfully fine temper, long daggers, and wooden shields covered with thick bull hide, the studs and umbrels being of bronze wrought into fantastic runic patterns.

Halfdan, being the challenger, strode first to the island, fording the cold, shallow water from the snow-clad mountains with long, sweeping strides that made the current rise in sparkling spray as he dashed through it. On landing he kissed his sword-hilt to Sigrüna.

Helgi crossed the ford immediately after, and also saluted his sister, who smiled, but turned very pale; the usual roseate hue

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fading from her cheeks as she for the first time realised to what sore issue the battle might be brought by the huge brands which glittered in the hands of the champions. A deerskin being spread upon a rock, she gladly sat down upon it, for her limbs now trembled so that they would scarcely sustain her.

The signal to engage being given, the two warriors immediately stepped to the centre of the little islet, Halfdan, standing a head above his opponent, looking a veritable giant; not that Helgi was by any means a small man, being above the average height and sturdily and strongly built, a man of great strength. Halfdan, with his comely visage and flowing raven locks, was like a huge animate statue to look upon.

There was a pause for a moment, as the two champions confronted each other. Then, with a sudden rush, Halfdan sprang forward and his long, straight-bladed *sæx* rose high in air, and, falling with a sudden flash, shore off a large piece from the shield borne on Helgi's left arm, causing him to stagger.

Bracing himself, Helgi in turn struck at his fierce opponent; but Halfdan, with his glittering brand "Mœdra," put aside the stroke and made a fierce assault upon the Dane, who, with his damaged shield, could guard but part of his body. Blow after blow was dealt by Halfdan with lightning rapidity, so that Helgi could find no time to reply; but with sword and shield he cleverly turned death aside; only one blow swept past his guard, and that smote him upon the right shoulder, sheering its way through many of the rings of chain mail, and wounding him so sorely that the blood ran down his arm quite to his hand, rendering his sword handle so slippery that he could not retain a firm grip.

Halfdan . . . then stepped forth into the midst of the Bœndr, and with upraised hand challenged the brothers, Helgi and Starkad.

Again he staggered, while Sigrūna, his sister, looked on with a beating heart and an expression of terror in her eyes.

And so for a long space they fought round and round the little *holme*, and at length, in order to avoid falling over the bank into the river, for he was hard pressed by the now furious Helgi, Halfdan was forced into a cramped attitude, and, being unable to evade the point of the Dane's sword, he received the downward sweep upon his uncovered thigh, for his mail coat was not long enough to cover him to the knee.

The wound was a span long, but not deep;

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and, although he was encrimsoned to his toes, he heeded it but lightly as a wound; but this triumph of his opponent set up the Berserker fury in him; and uttering loud and ferocious cries, he leapt forward, and with a powerful blow again clove through Helgi's shield, nearly severing his hand.

Helgi with a cry of pain gave ground, and staggering, stepped too far backward, falling headlong into the turbulent, icy Rut.

At this a great roar went up from the onlookers, whose excitement had found frequent vent in cries of advice to the combatants, in fierce yells of exultation or admiration as first one and then the other warrior had the better of the fight.

With a bound Halfdan leapt into the frigid stream, and holding his sword threateningly over the fallen warrior, loudly demanded *holmlansu* (indemnity for releasing a foe, a ransom), for Helgi, having overstepped the bounds, was held by the laws of *holmganga* to have retreated, and having lost his sword in his fall, was at Halfdan's mercy.

Helgi dare not attempt to rise, or the great blade "Mœdra" would have taken off his head as a billhook slices a half-frozen turnip for the winter feed of stalled cattle.

"*Holmlansu?* *Holmlansu?*" shouted Halfdan, as he turned his fierce eyes upon Heimdal, the father.

Heimdal raised his right hand in token that he assented, while Sigrüna, anxious to save her brother, commenced stripping her hair of its silver ornaments; but her friends prevented her, assuring her that her father would pay *holmlansu* in due time, and pressing her gently back to her skin-covered seat on the rocks.

Halfdan's assistant waited assiduously upon him, sewing up the great, gaping gash in his thigh with a bone needle and tough though fine deer sinew, and supplying him with a mighty horn of mead to strengthen and refresh him after the long and hard-fought battle, and give him fresh vigour for the next onset.

His mail-coat, helmet, and long white shirt being removed, he was then bathed in the cool waters of the Rut, his limbs rubbed vigorously with pads of horsehair, a rest given him, and after a time he notified his readiness to try his skill against the might of the second brother, Starkad.

Helgi was carried unconscious, mangled, and bruised to his father's home just as Starkad, foaming with rage, crossed the ford and climbed upon the island.

Old Heimdal was to give the word for the onset, but until he did so the two champions, each in his own ground, and true to the Viking custom, roared and bellowed like two enraged bulls, biting the edges of their shields and foaming at the mouth. Then they made fierce brandishes with their swords as if they were battling with unseen enemies, and beat their shields with the flat of the blades till they rang again. This was the Berserk fury.

Heimdal now gave the signal, when the champions immediately ceased their howling and strange gestures, and warily approaching each other commenced the combat.

Starkad was a taller and bigger man than his brother, and being several years older was stronger and more mature in stamina, and would fain have engaged the Icelander first, but so eager was Helgi for the fray and wishful to be first in the field that Starkad had given way, perhaps foolishly.

Bright sparks flew from helmet and ringed mail, and when sword or shield failed to parry the heavy blows the links of steel were driven into the yielding flesh, bruising and battering the parts so struck and causing copious floods of blood to flow.

After a time of tremendous energy the two stalwart men with one accord paused mutually from sheer exhaustion, and rested panting upon their trenchant blades, glaring meanwhile angrily at each other as if looks could wound.

"Yield ye?" cried Halfdan fiercely.

"Yield? Nay, not I. That may be your cry in Iceland, but we know not its meaning in Jutland. Help me, O Odin, and thou shalt ere long cry it to me. Guard thyself, Halfdan!"

Then leaping forward with a shout Starkad struck at his opponent so fiercely that he clove a great gap in Halfdan's helmet and brought the giant to his knees, but at the same time, his swordblade, being unequal to the violent shock, became divorced from the hilt, and with a whirring sound hurtled through the air and plunged into the river beside him.

For an instant Starkad gazed with a look of surprise at the useless hilt in his hand; then as Halfdan arose, having recovered from the terrible stroke, he flung it full in his face, laying bare the right cheek to the malar bone, and, instantly drawing his dagger, stood sturdily and boldly to maintain the unequal fight.

Sigrüna started to her feet, uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless into the arms of her attendant tirewoman, for she

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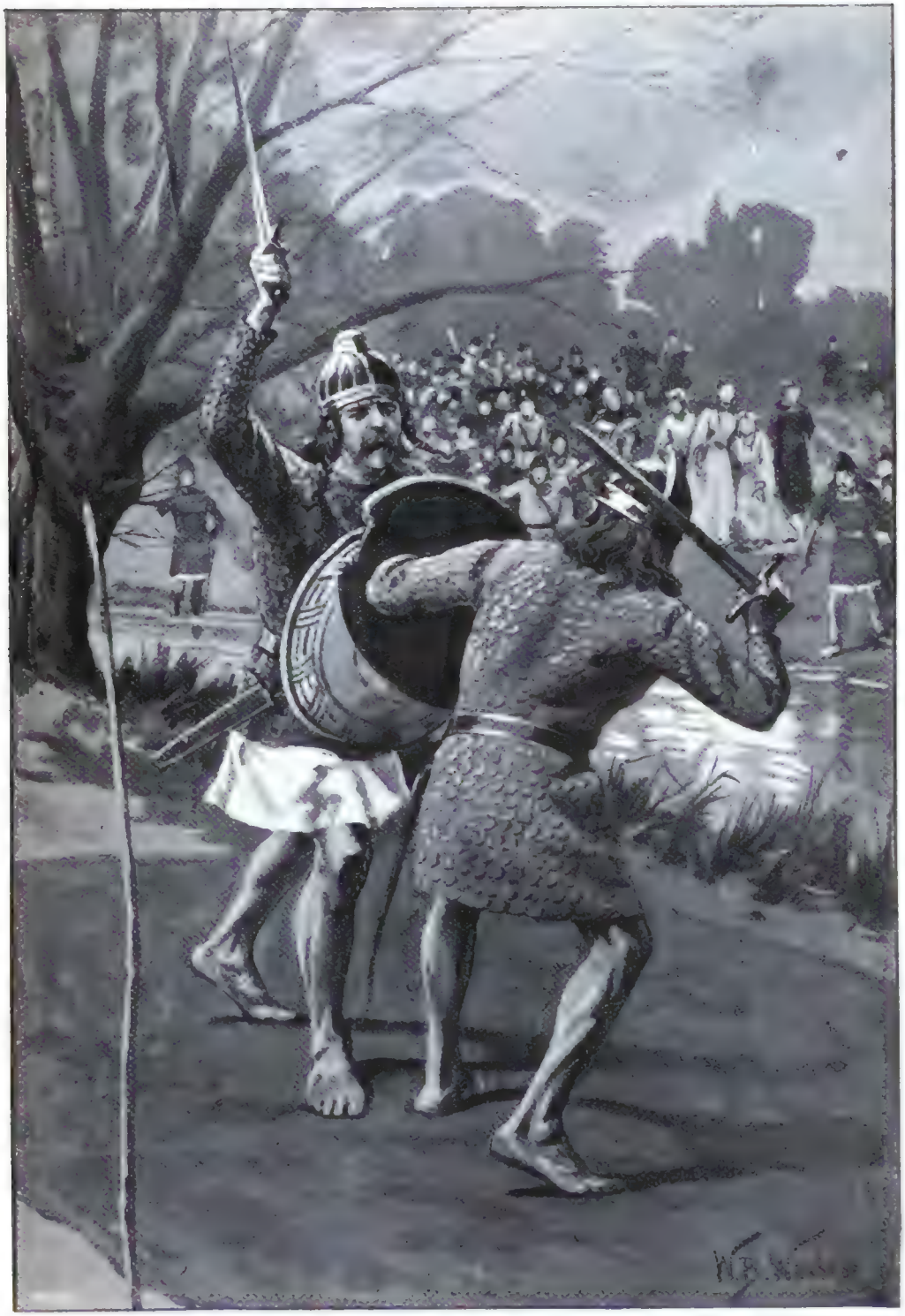

Uttering loud and ferocious cries, he leapt forward, and with a powerful blow again clove through Helgi's shield.

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realised that with such a puny weapon her brother was but as a dead man—he must inevitably fall before huge Halfdan and his mighty *sæx* "Mœdra."

Heimdal, forgetting his infirmity, stood on the very brink of the river's bank, and in a state of terror, extending his hand towards the island, cried:

"Stay, Halfdan! Stay thy hand, noble youth, and double *holmlausu* I will give thee to spare my son, my firstborn."

Then seeing the Icelander advancing as if bent on annihilating the all but defenceless man, he shrieked: "Spare him, good Halfdan! Have pity on my grey head. Spare him for Sigrüna's sake! Ah—ah!" And the old man fell on his knees, hiding his face in the bend of his elbow, for at that moment, like a sunray, up flashed the bright blade of "Mœdra" amid the shrieks of the excited assembly, who now expected to see the bloody head and golden locks of Starkad whirled from his body into the river (for Starkad, seeing resistance vain, had knelt to receive the stroke), but "Mœdra" flashed high through the air over the heads of the multitude and fell with a clang upon the hard earth behind them.

Had the sword accidentally slipped from his grasp?

No, the brave Icelander had hurled it from him, disdaining the advantage he had over his antagonist. Starkad arose, and there, foot to foot, eye to eye, stood the two bleeding, panting, and perspiring warriors, each dagger in hand, eager for the last short, deadly struggle.

"Hold, Halfdan! Hold, Starkad! I command you both!" And as he shouted, Heimdal, with his long, iron-grey beard and hair fluttering in the wind, rushed through the foaming ford, followed by his friends and thralls, and, gaining the island, thrust himself between the two men, then raising his oaken staff in his great, sinewy hand, he cried:

"My sons, I forbid you. Fight no more! Starkad, I thank you for your bravery; and Halfdan, I require no further proof of your gentle blood—none but a true man would have thrown away his sword at the moment of victory, so disdaining all advantage.

"Embrace me, my sons," he continued, "and, my friends, congratulate me that I this day give a daughter only to receive a noble son.

"Starkad, my brave son, Boosåd, my further farm, is thine; and Halfdan, Sigrüna is thine; and may peace and happiness fall on you both, though bloody has been the wooing."

"My sons, I forbid you. Fight no more!"

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A well-known Society woman plays a game of handball in her own room every morning. Her figure is and has been for years the pride of her friends.

THE WOMAN BEAUTIFUL

No. VIII.—THE WOMAN WITH A YOUTHFUL FIGURE.

By Augusta Prescott.

To the Possessor of a Youthful Figure the Advancing Years Matter Little. Those Having This Great Gift will Learn from This Article How to Preserve it; Those Who Lack it are Told How it may be Attained.

"You are as young as your figure," said a physical culturist who has devoted her life to the preservation of the form feminine. "I mean what I say when I assert that a woman is judged, not by her face, but by her form. In these days of massage and beauty culture all faces are young. But it is the form that gives a woman away.

"In my capacity as a physical culturist I am called upon to teach Society women how to get thin. It is a difficult task, for they are not as a rule inclined to self-denial. 'It is too much trouble,' they declare. And then, before they know it, they become so stout that they cannot reduce.

"And yet it is always possible to reduce the weight. The woman who weighs two hundred pounds can reclaim her figure if she wants to do so. She can reduce and become as slight as she was in her girlhood days. Fat can always be driven away.

"The way to reduce fat is a twofold one, and the first and easiest method is by massage. Massage will reduce the weight, for it acts like a vigorous exercise. But this method, while always effective, is always expensive. It takes a masseuse who understands her business to pound the fat away.

"Dieting is the second way to reduce the figure and make a woman look young and girlish again. But there are so very few women who can diet. The Weir Mitchell milk diet, as it is called, is perfect from a reduction standpoint. But, alas! it makes one feel weak, and it is not satisfying. Few fat women can live upon two quarts of milk a day. They want something solid.

"I reduced a fat woman by using a combination of the Banting method and the milk diet. And to this I added a few recommendations of my own. I allowed her one cup of coffee for breakfast and one roll; also one egg. For luncheon, I gave her one cup of tea, one slice of toast, and one slice of meat. For dinner, one vegetable, one slice of meat, and one slice of toast. Between meals I let her drink all the water she wanted. She walked five miles a day, and got thin under my care."

The woman with the girlish figure must work upon it at all times to keep it girlish. There is something about fat which causes it

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In New York there is a gymnasium class where members are taught to exercise in pairs. One of the best exercises is that of trotting up and down the floor. With their hands on each other's shoulders they make a tour of the gymnasium.

to increase as the years go on. At twenty nearly all women are slender. But, at the age of twenty-five, the pounds begin to accumulate. By thirty the pretty lines have disappeared, and at the age of thirty-five the woman has settled down to a state of fat. At forty her condition is nearly hopeless. She is so fat that she cannot reason, for fat blunts the brain as well as the body.

Yet getting back the girlish figure is merely a matter of hard work. There must be three months of dieting and reform. And then the woman who has reduced her figure will find herself once more among the comely ones. She has reclaimed herself until she looks nice again.

But even now there is danger. Fat soon returns, and the woman with a tendency to get stout will invariably add to her weight if there is the least inclination to do so.

There is in some people an inherited tendency to grow stout.

"I am fat," said a woman to a physical culturist, "though I eat almost nothing at all. I do not eat one half the food that is eaten by my thin sister, yet I am as fat as butter, while she is skin and bones!"

"Yes, madam," said the specialist, "but you are differently constituted. Your sister is of the wiry, nervous type. She burns up her fat. Your food is absorbed by your system. It makes flesh for you. Therefore you do not require nearly as much food. You could get along with half the amount you eat at present, small though it is."

To the naturally fat there is this to be said. If you want to keep your youthful figure you must learn to like the things that make you thin. Learn to eat slowly, so that you do not consume quite so much food as you would if you bolted. Learn to go without drinking at your meals. Go without sweets for a whole month until you lose your taste for them. Take your tea and coffee without sugar for a week, and see if you can't learn to like them so.

To the woman who wants to keep her girlish figure there is other advice. And in the list of precautionary things there might be mentioned this one—weigh yourself daily. Don't let time slip by without ascertaining if you have increased your weight

A jiu-jitsu exercise to keep the waist from growing thick. Care must be taken when practising jiu-jitsu to avoid a strain.

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or lost it. Keep notes on your physical condition.

It was a member of Mrs. Langtry's company who said: "The Lily owes her fine figure to the care she takes of it. She carries in her luggage a set of blue enamel bathroom scales. Each night she is weighed. If she has gained an ounce she Bants."

And one of Adelina Patti's troupe, speaking of Patti and her wonderful preservation, said: "It is no wonder that Patti looks young. She is massaged every night before she goes to bed. Not only her face, but her whole figure. And she exercises half-an-hour after she puts on her night-robe. She keeps her figure young. Not for worlds would she let the pounds accumulate round her waistline."

The woman who wants to keep young must cultivate a love of sports. She may not want to get out into the open and exercise; and she may be so placed that she cannot play golf. But she can exercise at home; and her field of sports can be her own room.

A well-known Society woman plays a game of handball in her own room every morning. She chose a soft rubber ball, and her costume was a convenient little pair of knickerbockers. Dressed in these, she threw and caught the ball, exercising swiftly for half-an-hour in the morning, and also at night. Her figure is, and has been for years, the pride of her friends.

The best thing for the beginner is the kimono exercise. The windows are opened, and the beginner, with a wand (a broomstick will do) in her hand, goes through some very simple calisthenics.

In the high step exercise, the "patient" walks across the room doing a high step. She lifts her feet as high as possible while she walks. At each step her knee should almost tap her chest.

In New York there is a gymnasium class where the members are taught to exercise in pairs. Physical culture for two is taught there. Each day the members run in, put on fancy gymnastic costumes, and come out upon the floor to disport. Their exercises are simple, but very effective. One of the best is that of trotting up and down the floor. With their hands upon each other's shoulders they make a tour of the gymnasium. There is nothing difficult about it. But it does the work.

Jiu-jitsu is still popular. But it has settled down from a fad into a fact. Nor is it difficult. From a set of pictures—taken from any standard work—the amateur can get up a very creditable game of jiu-jitsu. But it is

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not an exercise for the beginner. The dangers are too great. The muscles may become strained. And, when this has happened, it means a stopping of all exercise for days and weeks. It is better to leave difficult things until a later date.

The best thing for the beginner is the kimono exercise. To do this, put on a kimono in the early morning. The windows are opened, and the beginner, with a wand in her hand, goes through some very simple calisthenics. Needless to say, the clothing is very loose, and the kimono is very comfortable. The "wand" need be nothing more than a broomstick, and the exercises need not be prolonged more than half-an-hour. But the fat will begin to slide off. If one is already slim, it will preserve the figure amazingly.

The beginner should exercise for half-an-hour by the clock. Perseverance and regularity are indispensable to success.

The woman with a youthful figure should not rest upon her laurels. She should weigh herself, and take notice. If there is a tendency to put on fat, she should try the high-step exercise. This is the very latest thing in the London gymnasia. The "patient," dressed in a knicker-bocker suit, walks across the room doing a high step. She lifts her feet as high as possible while she walks. At each step her knee should almost tap her chest. Five minutes of this will send the blood tingling to all parts of the body, and keep the fat in abeyance.

The woman who has attained a girlish figure should next try to make it perfectly proportioned. And this is not a difficult matter, for the human frame is very pliable, and can be bent and moulded at will. She should aim at a state of perfect proportion.

The woman with the girlish figure must learn how to dress, so that her figure will look as girlish as it really is. Up-and-down lines make a woman look taller. But a white blouse with a black skirt makes her look shorter. All bunchy things increase the size of the figure, and satin makes one look a third bigger than one really is. Pink and blue are colours that seem to increase the natural size, while tan and écru seem to decrease it. Black makes one look smaller, but it is not girlish. White, on the other hand, if well fitting, does not increase the natural size, and it is very becoming.

The woman with a girlish figure should dress girlishly. But this statement is generally misunderstood. The woman who wants to look young puts on bows and furbelows; but this is a mistake. She should take them off, and she will look much more youthful.

Hands without rings look younger than hands that are jewel-laden. The throat without a dog-collar looks more slender than the one that is bound round with gems. The blouse that is simple looks slimmer than the one that is decked with bows. And the plain, straight-lined gown invariably looks younger than the one that is heavily trimmed. Don't make any mistake on these points, O woman desiring to look youthful!

The woman who has outgrown her youthful figure should go to work upon her fattest portions. Fat comes first at the back of the neck. It accumulates between the shoulder-blades, forming one great bunch, which is so common that it is known as the middle-age lump. There are few women over thirty-five years of age who do not suffer from this bunch of fat at the back of the neck. To get it off requires vigorous physical culture.

The woman with the girlish figure should rejoice. Hers is the good part of life. She never grows old.

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How It Proved a Burglar Alarm and a Matchmaker.

I.

He was, without exception, the most forlorn and hideous specimen of kittenhood I have ever seen. He was a good deal more than half starved, and his head seemed too big for his diminutive body. In colour he was an uncomely mixture of tabby and white—or what one might suppose would be white if properly cleaned!—and the tabby part of him was all put on in untidy splotches. One eye had a dark patch which made it seem greatly larger than the other, which was on the white half of his face, and had a pink rim round it, and this, in spite of his extreme youth, gave him a sinister expression quite at variance with the accepted innocence of kittenhood. But words fail to describe the hideous inefficiency of the stump which he proudly erected as a substitute for a tail!

Such was the Manx Cat when first I saw him; and as I hate cats in general, ugly ones in particular, and Manx ones in very extra-special particular, it was no wonder that I gave peremptory orders for his ejection.

The housemaid picked him up most gingerly in her apron, and carried him half way down the street and put him into someone else's garden. He followed her, skilfully keeping on the other side of the hedges and railings, and arrived back at the same time, with a faint smile on his wan face.

Then the cook, who was a person of substance and determination, took the matter—but not the kitten—in hand. He was too unclean to be touched, she considered, so she wrapped him in newspaper and bore him down the street, even to the uttermost corner; but he returned under the shelter of her ample skirts—to her great surprise and greater indignation.

Others of the household having failed as ignominiously, I determined to settle the question of its home myself. *It* settled *itself* under the sleeve of my best blouse with a purr of content, which was doubtless meant to be disarming, but which in no way shook my stern resolution to dispose of it finally.

I was just a little bit disconcerted and annoyed when I saw the Young Man Opposite watching the proceedings with interest. That Young Man had an objectionable habit of always seeing me when I didn't want to be seen.

Without, however, giving so much as a glance in his direction, I rang the bell of each house in succession, and asked whether the lost kitten belonged there. At the last house but one the girl told me that it was the property of the people next door, who "'ad been and gone away and left the old cat and her kittens to starve, and warn't

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expected back not till the day after termorrer." They had found the other two little kittens quite dead, and the old cat had disappeared.

"All right," I admonished the kitten. "I keep you just for those two days for the sake of dear St. Francis of Assisi, and give you as much new milk as you like—or as is good for you. At the end of that time you return to your own people and never trouble me more. It's a bargain?"

Did the Manx Cat wink one eye, or did I only imagine it? At all events, he put his paw on mine in confirmation of the oath, and as, according to habit, his claws were all extended, the bargain was sealed in blood—*my* blood!

The Household jeered, but the Kitchen was fortunately sympathetic, and indignant with the deserters. The skeleton kitten was fed with small doses of milk and water to begin with, and behaved itself with commendable humility, sitting quietly among the ashes on the kitchen hearth, or, when these were swept up, retiring to the coal-box.

I kept my eye on the deserted house, and, as soon as there was any sign of the inmates' returning, once more sallied forth with the kitten in my arms. It had grown a trifle less emaciated in those two days of plenty, but its ears were very long in proportion to its pointed little face, and as it watched me keenly with its bright eyes it looked more like a fox-cub than a kitten.

I returned it to its rightful owners, who thanked me so politely for my kindness that I could not summon up courage to deliver my carefully-prepared lecture on the cruelty of leaving animals unprovided for in an empty house.

On the way home I met the Young Man Opposite.

"Disposed of that hideous little beast?" he asked, with interest.

"Oh, yes!" I assured him, with conviction.

"It's certain to come back," he rejoined.

"Not at all," I asserted. "Besides, I should not keep it if it did."

"Indeed?" he queried doubtfully, gazing dreamily over the neighbouring garden wall, with an expression of amusement in the corners of his mouth which annoyed me.

So I said "Good-bye" abruptly, and turned into my house—where the Manx Cat greeted me effusively on the threshold!

I waited until the Young Man Opposite was out of sight, and then I took it back once more, and asked them to lock it up. This they faithfully promised to do, and no doubt did their best to keep their word, for it was almost dusk when it strolled in the back way and demanded milk!

It was gradually dawning upon my understanding that, whatever my intention might be with regard to the Manx Cat, *it* had irrevocably made up its feline mind to adopt *me!*

I resolved not to submit to my fate without a struggle—I even *washed* the kitten in order to make it hate me—but!—

"Kismet," remarked the Young Man Opposite, as he met me next day returning from the whilom deserted house with the Manx Cat in my arms.

"They've given it to me," I exclaimed dejectedly, "and it was no use saying 'No,' because it always comes back.

"They say it's a *real* Manx," I continued, as the Young Man held it aloft by the scruff of its neck and looked suspiciously at its stump. The Manx kicked resentfully with its hind legs, exactly like a rabbit. "They've told me I can give it away if I like, but I can't get anyone to have it—you see it's so very hideous!"

"Personally, I rather admire it," said the Young Man Opposite, as he replaced the struggling kitten in my arms. "It's an animal that always excites curiosity—front view, it's a cross between a cat and a fox; back view, pure rabbit——"

"Then, as you covet it so much, do allow me to make you a present of it," I said, graciously holding it out to him.

I must do him the justice to say that he did not look in the least disconcerted or taken aback. On the contrary, a flush of what was apparently honest delight spread over his brown face. It struck me for the first time that he was really rather good-looking, in a strong, irregular sort of way.

"Thank—you—awfully; the only difficulty is how to keep it," he stammered, and, as if to point his remark, the Manx suddenly put its sharp little teeth into his restraining fingers, gave a desperate struggle and leap, which landed it on my shoulder, and, eluding my attempt to catch it by administering a very scratchy slap to my cheek, digging its hind claws into my arm, and using language which it was sad to hear from one so young, it disappeared into *my* house.

"The Manx does not seem to approve of the change of owners," remarked the Young Man Opposite, as we gazed ruefully at our wounds.

"Nonsense," I said firmly, "the Manx has

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nothing to do with it. If I give it away it *has* to be given away."

The Manx's new owner did not seem to pay much attention to my words, but was gazing instead with great consternation at my cheek, which I was industriously mopping with my handkerchief.

"You'll have to try to keep it," I continued. "I shall charge you three guineas a week board and lodging if it comes to me."

"Right you are!" he agreed joyfully, and I remembered with dismay that it was a matter of common report that the Young Man Opposite was horribly, vulgarly rich, with a house in town as well as this one at the seaside, and another in the country, too! It was one of the reasons why I had determined to have as little as possible to do with him. He was sure to be a bumptious, conceited parvenu, and think that every girl who spoke to him was trying to "catch" him. I had never exchanged more than a dozen words with him until this afternoon, although he and Dick, my little crippled brother, were often together "on the Front," and Dick voted him "a jolly good sort"—merely because he was such an adept at flying box-kites, I fancy!

"They say it's a *real* Manx," I continued, as the Young Man held it aloft by the scruff of its neck.

And now we had suddenly leapt into a sort of intimacy; and it was all the fault of that wretched Manx Cat! Just at this opportune moment I observed the guilty author of all the mischief gaily scrambling up the dainty muslin curtains of my own special sitting-room in quest of the swinging tassel of the blind.

With one horrified ejaculation of "Look!" I darted into the house

And that all-too-obedient Young Man *did* look, too, ever so much longer than I meant him to do, for he was still "looking" when I seized and shook the culprit and shut the window with a bang.

II.

In a month—less than a month—the Manx Cat had the whole household at its grimy feet. Its feet were always grimy because it loved to go into the cellar and play with the coal.

Mother was the only one in the house who resisted the Manx Cat's fascination; she only tolerated it because it beguiled the tedious hours for Dick with its funny ways. But at last the day, or, to be strictly accurate, the *night,* arrived when toleration was to give

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way to admiration and gratitude, and from being the pet of the household the Manx Cat became the hero of the hour and the talk of the town!

It was on this wise.

The Manx Cat had become a reprobate in the matter of staying out at night. We had to try to get it in, because otherwise it had a habit of jumping through Dick's window and on to his bed, waking him up with a start. Dick's bedroom was on the ground-floor, and looked into the garden at the back of the house.

The Young Man Opposite was alive to his responsibilities as the Manx Cat's real owner, and was always ready to help in the nightly search—a search in which I was generally forced to join, because I was the only person by whom the Manx Cat would allow itself to be caught. It "played the game," as Dick expressed it, with the greatest zest, and seldom let itself be captured until it had given the Household an invigorating run.

On this fateful night, however, there was not a sign of it to be seen—not a single mew in answer to our blandishments! and, not by any means for the first time in the history of the hunt, we had to give up the search in despair!

For some unknown reason I was restless and excited and could not sleep. At last I got up and went to the window, and stood there inhaling the fresh night air. My eyes roamed mechanically over the garden, noting the clumps of fair evening primroses and the dazzling, star-like blossoms of the tobacco-plants, whilst my thoughts were occupied by somebody—I mean something—else. Suddenly my attention was arrested by a white object almost at the top of a stumpy little apple-tree which grew at the further side of the garden. In a moment I knew what it was—the waistcoat of the Manx, of course. I was just wondering whether I had not better slip on my dressing-gown and go down and try to catch it, when I happened to see something dark crawling slowly along the garden wall. It was so stealthy in its movements that at first I rubbed my eyes, not sure that they had not deceived me.

No! It was a man, dragging himself along flat on his stomach to avoid notice! Just beyond the apple-tree he dropped to the ground, and then gave a very soft, low whistle. This was answered from somewhere either in or very near our house, and it suddenly flashed upon me what it all meant. This man—these men—were burglars! There had been several daring robberies in the neighbourhood lately, and there could be no doubt about it that we were the object of this nocturnal visit.

I felt absolutely paralysed, unable to move or to make a sound, when I noticed the white patch advancing along a branch in the direction of the creeping figure. I knew intuitively what was going to happen, and all my fright vanished in an intense desire to laugh.

That absurd Manx Cat, which was ever under the impression that it was a large and terrible tiger calculated to strike terror into the stoutest heart, and which was always springing out at us from odd corners, was going to play its favourite trick on the unsuspecting burglar! I only prayed—and prayed fervently—that it might, as its manner was, spring with all its claws out, and they at their sharpest! And my prayer was amply answered.

Just as the dark figure came beneath the tree, down dropped the Manx with unerring precision plump on to the man's crouching shoulders, and, to judge from the unearthly yell which rent the air, I should say its claws went right into the nape of his neck. Probably the burglar believed in a personal devil, who had come to claim his own at last, as he felt the claws and saw the flaming yellow eyes! At the same moment my tongue became untied, and I gave a scream which put the burglar's to shame.

Then I shouted at the top of my voice, and what *do* you think I said?—not "thieves," or "fire," or "help," or anything of that sort, but "Manx! Manx! oh, save my Manx!" for I suddenly felt afraid that the burglar had got it and would wring its neck.

Not a thought of the family plate or jewellery was in my head as I rushed wildly downstairs—only a desperate longing that the Young Man Opposite would suddenly come to the rescue. Why the Young Man Opposite should be the first person I should instinctively turn to for help, rather than my own father or the nearest policeman, I cannot explain to myself, much less to you!

And the marvellous part of it was that by the time I got into the garden, rushing through poor Dick's room and frightening him more than an army of cats or burglars could have done, there *was* the Young Man Opposite—sitting on the top of the burglar! Windows were thrown up, and people shouted, and soon an excited little crowd had collected in the garden—a policeman amongst the latest to arrive. But he had a good reason for being tardy, as he had been in hot

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pursuit of the other burglar, who had managed to elude him, however.

We were a most picturesque group—all except the Young Man Opposite, who was a discordant feature in irreproachable evening dress. Father looked ferocious in his pyjamas, armed with a rifle, and Mother had an eiderdown wrapped round her shoulders, and—but my observations of my neighbours' attire were cut short by the sudden horrific recollection that *I* was more airily clad than any of them, and I pattered off as fast as my bare feet would carry me into Dick's room. Poor little chap! He was sitting up in bed, clasping that dear, *dear* Manx Cat in his arms, and longing to hear what it was all about. I gave him a brief "synopsis of events" and promised to come down and give fuller details when I was in fuller dress to match!

Down dropped the Manx with unerring precision plump on to the man's crouching shoulders.

When I came to fulfil my promise I found all the family *and* the Young Man Opposite gathered in Dick's room.

I was longing to hear how he could explain his opportune presence just in the nick of time.

It seems that he, too, had felt restless, and as he didn't want to sleep had walked up and down the road for some time smoking, and then had sat quietly on a wall from which he could see my window.

He saw me come to the window and draw the curtain aside. *I* think it would have been the right thing for him to go away then, but it seems *he* didn't, and after he had rendered the Household such a signal service I could not very well mention my opinion just then, so I saved it up for a future occasion.

When he heard the burglar and me having our yelling duet, he jumped over our garden wall and was just in time to catch the burglar before he had quite recovered from the shock of the Manx Cat's attack.

It really *was* one of the notorious band of thieves who had been such a terror to the neighbourhood, and, of course, the affair got into all the local papers, and the Manx Cat became famous.

Some time after this I had a strange note. It was an enormous bill for the Manx Cat, including board and residence, medical attendance, damage to furniture, and various items, amounting in all to £50, and inclosed was a cheque from the Young Man Opposite for that sum.

Of course the bill was Dick's concoction, and very proud he was of the result.

"Don't be such a fool—he's as rich as Crœsus, and you might just as well have a jolly good spree on it," was his indignant remonstrance when I announced my intention of returning the cheque to the Young Man Opposite at once.

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I was on my way to the post when I met the proprietor of the Manx Cat.

"It would have been rather an expensive joke for you if I had cashed this," I observed as I handed him the letter.

"It wasn't a joke at all," he replied. "Dead earnest, I assure you."

"You don't mean to say you thought for one moment that I should take it?" I asked indignantly.

"Not for a moment," he reassured me, "but I knew you would have to speak or write about it, and you are so very difficult to get hold of, anyway."

"I don't understand you," I said stiffly. "You see me whenever you come to the house—which is pretty often."

"Yes, with all sorts of people always buzzing about," he said. The Young Man Opposite has no gift of language—"buzz" is the most inadequate phrase he could possibly have invented to describe the dignified movements of my aristocratic mother! Then he came to a dead pause, and looked at the letter in his hand as if for inspiration.

"I say, you know, you'd better cash this cheque before next month has expired."

"Why?" I asked, moved by curiosity into forgetting the fact that there was no question of cashing the cheque at all.

"Because," he said confidently and confidentially, "next month I should have to make it out to your other name."

"What *do* you mean?" I said in utter bewilderment, and before I knew what was happening he had drawn me close to him and whispered "Mrs. ——" into my ear.

I wriggled away as quickly as I could. How *dare* he put his arm round me in such a public place, and how dare he take it for granted—that——? I gasped out something incoherent of this sort, ending with the ejaculation:

"Why, you haven't even proposed to me yet!"

"Of course not!" he said triumphantly. "That's just what I'm complaining of; you've never given me the shadow of a chance—I don't believe I should ever have got to know you if it hadn't been for that thrice-blessed Manx Cat. You always did your level best to get rid of me—I believe you would even have washed me, like the Manx, if you had thought it would send me off. Now I come to think of it," continued the suddenly loquacious Young Man, as he opened the garden gate for me (and let *himself* in, too, without asking permission!), "there is no need for me to propose at all!"

"And why not, I should like to know?" I asked indignantly.

"Well, you see, it's like this—you always say that it's not the Manx Cat that belongs to you, but you to the Manx Cat, don't you?"

I had to admit that this was so.

"Then," he continued triumphantly, "as the Manx Cat is mine, by deed of gift, you are mine also—that's logic."

Logic or not, it happened so in the end, of course, and the Manx Cat, with a huge satin bow round his neck, quite eclipsed the wedding cake in popularity at the great function.

The moral of this tale is—"If a homeless Manx Cat decides to come and live with you, just take it in at once. It will come whether you want it or not, and it may—and may it!—bring you as great good luck as it did to me!

HIS QUEST.

When nineteen years of age he thought
That marriage was his duty,
But vowed no girl would suit his taste
Unless possessed of beauty.

When twenty-five his fancy changed,
'Twas wealth alone he sought;
"A maid without a fortune is
No use to me," he thought.

When thirty-two he tried to find
A clever wife instead.
He didn't care for wealth or looks,
"She must have brains," he said.

A girl with brains he shortly met,
She wasn't hard to find—
But his kind offer was refused,
She'd someone else in mind.

And so, alas! at forty-five
A bachelor was he;
"Although I'd have them now," he groaned,
"The girls will not have me."

Dorothy Harrison.

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PICTURE PARAGRAPHS.

The Editor is Always Glad to Pay Liberally for Pictures Suitable for Use in This Feature. Photographs Should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

Photo *Advance Agency.*

One of the Smart Set's spoilt darlings equipped for motoring.

A SPOILT DARLING.

SOME weeks ago in a shop in the Burlington Arcade might have been seen a model of a dog, equipped, as in the illustration, with a coat, in the pocket of which showed a small handkerchief, little boots, motor-goggles, and harness. Underneath was the legend, "For Motoring."

It appears that faithful Fido must be carefully shielded from the elements when he makes excursions in his mistress' car; and if, in spite of the goggles, the wind *should* bring a tear to his eye, he likes his very own handkerchief to wipe it away with.

The most perfect canine specimen ever bred could not show, one would imagine, to very great advantage booted and begoggled as this poor creature is, and dogs have been known who would not rest until their teeth had made short work of the little boots.

Still, since fashion appears to rule that my lady's pet shall be clothed in goggles and overcoats with sporting designs, dogs must resign themselves to the inevitable.

Pity the poor dog! His is a hard lot in life. Not only must he have a limitless capacity for sweets and cakes, but nowadays, it seems, he has to take an intelligent interest in his wardrobe.

TAME WILD ANIMALS.

ANYONE who lands on the shores of Santa Catalina Island, off the coast of California, cannot fail to notice how tame the local wild animals are.

North of the island there is a rookery where about twenty enormous sea-lions live and have their being.

These animals, although ostensibly wild, allow boats to approach within a foot or so of them, and are quite willing to pose for their photographs.

One particular fisherman named Vincente seems extremely acceptable to the sea-lions. When they are really hungry, they follow him right along the parade, regardless of spectators.

Nowhere but at Santa Catalina can visitors see a herd of sea-lions swim into the bay, wriggle up the beach, and take fish from anyone who cares to throw it.

Photo *H. J. Shepstone.*

A "wild" sea-lion taking a fish from a fisherman's hand on the beach of Santa Catalina Island.

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A SOMERSAULTING MOTOR-CAR.

The Latest Thing in Sensations.

Large crowds will always assemble and meet together if they think there is a chance of seeing someone kill himself in a spectacular

The car starting its journey when the clutch is released.

manner, or at any rate go through a performance in which there is a sporting chance of his being killed.

It is this peculiarity of human nature which has accounted for the enormous popularity of an exhibition known as the "somersaulting motor-car."

The apparatus incidental to the performance was invented by Mr. Maurice Garanger, of New York City. It

Nearly a complete somersault.

consists of an inclined chute with a pair of broad tracks for the wheels of the vehicle, and between these tracks a pair of guide rails.

There are also two ball-bearing rollers in front of the car which press against the sides of the rails and serve to guide it laterally.

The total weight of the car and performer is about eight hundred pounds. It is drawn by an attendant up to the top of the chute, which is fifty feet from the ground, and the performer is strapped into it.

She has no control whatever over the car, which is well cushioned, and, as can be seen in one of the illustrations, there is a pillow under the straps, to safeguard the intrepid passenger from possible injury or discomfort.

When all is ready the attendant releases the clutch, and the car sets out on its journey, momentarily gaining velocity. At the moment when it takes the leap it has a speed of about twenty-eight miles an hour.

Perhaps the most exciting moment of the exhibition, from the onlookers'

Leaving the track and just beginning to turn.

point of view, is immediately after the car has passed the apex of its course, for here the occupant, who is hanging head downward, appears to be stationary, while the car swings round over her.

All is over in an instant, however, for the gap is traversed in less than a second. The greatest care is necessary in stopping the car after its flight, and for this purpose a collapsible landing

The forward end of the car stands still for a moment while the rear swings over.

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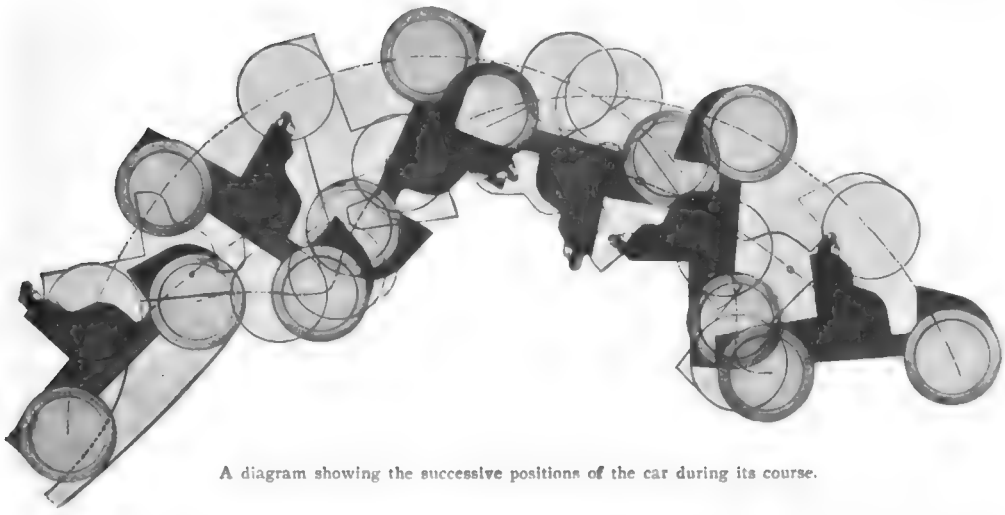

A diagram showing the successive positions of the car during its course.

platform has been invented. This platform is held in an inclined position by means of heavy springs.

When the car lands on the platform, the latter collapses, and the shock is absorbed by the springs. The vehicle then rolls off the platform and travels for a distance of thirty or forty feet before coming to a standstill.

No accidents have happened at present beyond the crushing of a wheel when the car has not landed fairly and squarely on all four wheels at the same time.

The diagram of the car's course shows its position at intervals of two feet, measured along the horizontal. The car is shown at the successive positions alternately solid and in outline, and the centre of gravity at each stage is indicated by a dot.

These dots are connected by a broken line, and two of the broken lines show the paths followed respectively by the forward and rear wheels.

The car itself is merely a dummy, having neither engine, brake, nor steering gear.

At one stage of her adventurous career the performer is hanging head downwards.

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This photo gives a graphic idea of the amount of game the van can hold.

THE KING'S GAME VAN.

Like the good sportsman that he is, the King is always trying to improve the general conditions of shooting, and is ever ready to test any new appliance that may be invented for this end.

There has always been a great difficulty in bringing the game home fresh and sweet from the shooting ground; in the ordinary course it is carried in bags, with the result that at the end of the day the birds are crushed and partly spoilt. His Majesty, however, employs a specially-constructed game van, which holds 1000 pheasants, a couple of men, and eight guns with ammunition.

The new idea has been thoroughly tested at Sandringham, and it is likely that we may find holders of large shootings following the King's lead, for the advantage of having the game clean, cool, and uncrushed is self-evident.

It probably matters little to a poor dead pheasant whether it is carried homeward in a cool, sterilised van, or bumped about in a game bag, but the difference to the consumer is very large.

There will be no more bruises on our game when every owner of a shooting or game preserve has a scientific hearse for the corpses which he and his guests have made.

Perhaps it would be a consolation to a bird to know that its tired body was kept in cold storage.

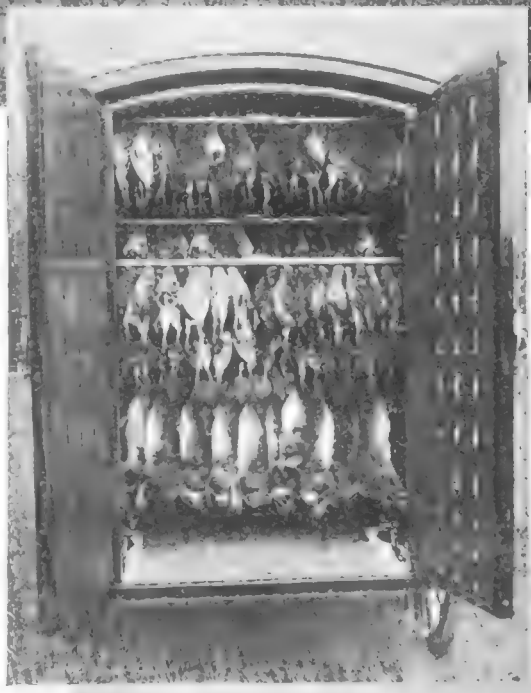

Photo W. H. Rogers & Co.

1. A near view of the interior of the van, showing it fully loaded.
2. The van ready to start for the coverts.

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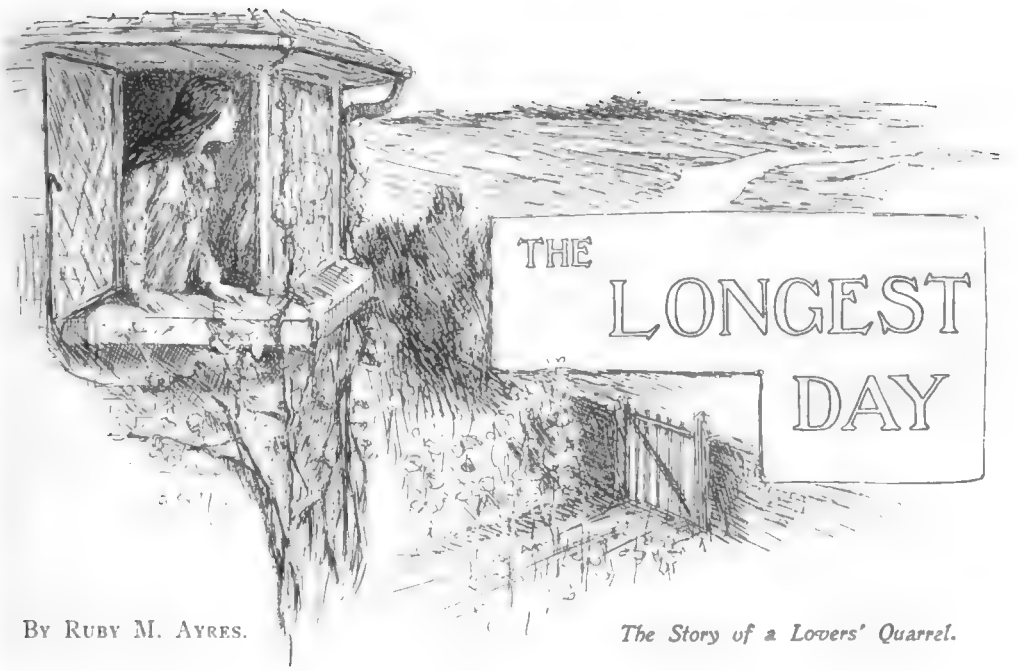

By Ruby M. Ayres.

The Story of a Lovers' Quarrel.

It was a week since it had happened—seven long, weary days, seven even longer and more weary nights—and it was summer.

The mornings broke sunny and cool to the soft singing of birds and the scent of opening flowers; and the evenings closed in perfumed dusk and the song of the nightingale; but the girl's heart was like a grey autumn day, warmed sometimes with the pale sunshine of hope.

Every morning since she and the man had parted, she awoke with the certainty that this was the day when he would write; but six had come and gone, and there was no letter.

But on this morning, the seventh, the world was so beautiful, the sun so warm, that the wonderful hope that springs eternal in all hearts again rose victorious above the despair of the previous night.

It was June, and the longest day.

With so many hours between sunrise and sunset, surely, surely he would spare one moment to think of her—to look back, to be sorry, to write that letter that would wipe out all the past bitterness.

The girl was proud.

"If you come back," she had said when they parted, "it will be of your own free will—I will never ask you to."

How many times since then had not her heart ached to speak the word that she had said she never would speak?

She opened her window, and leant out in the sunshine.

"He wrote to me last night," she confidently told a little sparrow that had flown on to a swaying rose-tree against the house, and was eyeing her with bright, inquisitive eyes.

The sparrow turned its little head knowingly, and chirped a cheerful acquiescence before he flew away.

The girl drew the window to, and dressed quickly.

The postman always came early, and, until a week ago, there had not been many mornings when he had not brought a square, grey envelope, addressed in a man's firm hand, and bearing the London postmark.

The girl went into the garden, and looked down the winding road. There would perhaps be half-a-dozen letters, for the girl's father was the only doctor for miles round; but she would know "it" at once—the square, grey envelope, with the stamp put on very straight.

"Miss Rose Atherton." He always wrote her full name, though she was Miss Atherton, and the doctor's only daughter.

The postman was not yet in sight, and she stopped to pick a red rose growing near the gate—"he" liked red roses.

She fastened it in her dress, and went out into the road.

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Far away in the sunshine the postman was trudging along.

The girl's heart gave a sudden leap—her cheeks flushed, her eyes grew starry.

Now there were but half-a-dozen steps between them—now but three—now but one.

The postman's wrinkled face deepened into a smile of great understanding—he knew those grey envelopes nearly as well as did the girl.

She held her hand to him with joyful assurance.

The postman shook his head.

The girl's hand fell to her side—she looked at the man with incredulous eyes and tremulous lips.

"Oh, are you sure?" she appealed piteously, "are you sure?"

The man's kindly eyes read distress in hers.

He carefully sorted through the bundle of letters he carried. "Three for the doctor," he said, and shook his head again. "Maybe it'll come by the next post—there's another from London to-day."

"Thank you," said the girl dully. "Perhaps it will."

She went slowly back to the house.

He had not written then, after all.

There was room for no other thought in her mind.

She must drag through another weary day—the longest day in all the beautiful summer—hours and hours before the welcome darkness—hours and hours of brilliant sunshine and the singing of birds.

He had not written—he had not forgiven her—and it was seven long days ago.

She went slowly up the garden path, past the rose-tree, back to the house.

The red rosebud drooped against her heart, as if it, too, felt the disappointment, and could not bear it.

Breakfast was laid in the long, cool dining-room.

The girl walked over to the window.

The figure of the postman was now merely a speck far down the dusty road.

She wanted to cry—she wanted to cry badly, but there were so many things to do—the boys to get off to school, the cakes to make, the drawing-room to dust, people to visit in the village, socks to darn; no time to think, no time to be weak—and the sun was shining, and the birds were singing as if nothing had happened—and that was the cruellest part of it all.

The boys came tumbling over each other into the room—four of them, brown-faced, freckled boys—and the girl turned from the window to pour out coffee, and hunt up lesson books, and pack sandwiches and cakes into the satchels amongst the Latin primers and first French courses—for the school was three miles away, and the boys did not come home till evening; and then down to the gate, to stand in the sunshine, and wave and wave till the sturdy little figures were out of sight.

The boys' mother had never failed to do that, even when it had rained so that she had to take an umbrella, and since she had gone to rest in the little churchyard Rose had done what she could to fill her place, so that the boys should not feel their loss quite so terribly.

It was not the same—nothing ever could be the same again, of course, but she had done her best.

She went slowly back to the house—it was not yet nine o'clock—and brushed imaginary specks of dust from her father's coat, and picked a flower for his buttonhole, and took out a lump of sugar to the old grey horse that was patiently waiting between the shafts of the old-fashioned buggy at the door to carry the doctor on his rounds.

"Rupert coming to-day, my dear?" asked the doctor, as he climbed into his seat and took the reins from the pudding-faced boy, who, in a hat two sizes too large for him, did duty for coachman and footman, and a great many other things besides.

"Not to-day, dear," said the girl. She lifted her face to be kissed. "Not to-day—he's busy." But her eyes were so full of tears that the pudding-faced boy and his ill-fitting hat looked more grotesque than ever as he clambered into the back seat, and folded his arms with a ridiculous assumption of smartness.

"Ah, well!" said the doctor, whistling to the old grey horse, by way of requesting him to be good enough to start. "It's a good thing to be busy. He'll want all the pennies he can make when he takes you away from me. May the day be far distant. Good-bye, my dear!"

And the funny old concern that the girl had grown so used to that she saw none of the old-fashionedness, went off at a sedate jog-trot down the path, and turned slowly into the road.

And the girl looked after it with far-away eyes.

She could not help wondering if "he" had gone off to the office yet, and who had brushed the dust from his coat, and if anyone

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had waved to him before he turned the corner, and if the happy day would ever come when she would kiss him at the door of their own little home, and proudly watch his tall figure out of sight.

And then the day-dream faded, and the old ache came back, with the remembrance that they had quarrelled, and that he had not written—that perhaps he never would—that perhaps——

It was uninteresting work that morning, making the cakes and dusting the pretty drawing-room.

What did it matter whether the cakes were light or as heavy as her own sad heart? or if the flowers were fresh in the vases or as dead as the hope that had filled her heart that morning as she leant on the sill and talked to the sparrow?

This was the day "he" would have come down had they not quarrelled—he always came every other week, though he really could not afford it.

The girl wandered aimlessly from the kitchen, leaving the cakes to do as they pleased about burning, and into the cool, low-ceilinged drawing-room.

Some of the flowers were drooping in the vases, and the cushions on the big, chintz-covered sofa were tumbled, as if they, too, were despondent.

The girl shook them up mechanically.

She sat down on the sofa and looked around her.

She and "he" had so often sat there together and talked in whispers, and built castles in Spain.

Sometimes they did not talk at all, but just sat and listened to the boys' voices as they played in the garden, or the bells of the village church in the distance. They would have been married at that church some day if they had not quarrelled—if he had not gone off in anger, or if she had not let him go.

Only seven days! Seven days may be an eternity sometimes.

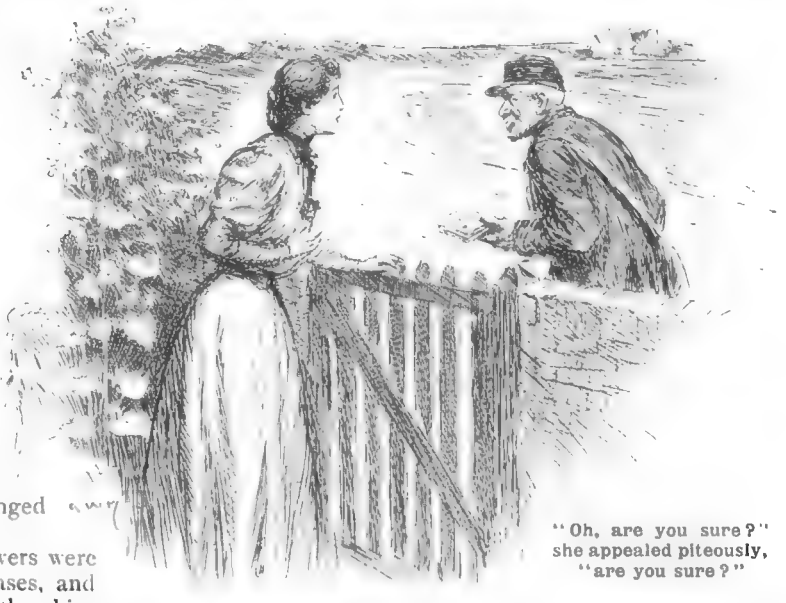
She smoothed the cushions again—tenderly this time. One of them was a quaint, old-fashioned thing, worked in gaudy wools, and edged with faded silk tassels.

A crimson-cheeked damsel, holding an impossible King Charles spaniel in her arms, smirked from a gaudy background of bright green grass and trees.

The girl's mother had worked it before she was married—when the old doctor was young, and when they two had dreamt of the future even as Rose and the man had dreamt of it.

The girl's hand lingered tenderly over its undoubted ugliness.

It was beautiful to her, and how often had she scolded "him" for twisting the tassels till they nearly came off, and for laughing at the impossible ears of the King Charles spaniel.



"Oh, are you sure?" she appealed piteously, "are you sure?"

She stooped now and dropped a soft little kiss on the queer, old-fashioned thing before she went out of the room—the kiss was for "him."

She paused in the hall and looked up at the grandfather clock on the stairs. Not yet eleven!—would the morning ever pass?—and there was not another post from London till four o'clock.

Perhaps he *had* written last night, after all, and forgotten to post it—men were always careless.

That would mean that he would have left it in his pocket—that he would probably,

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no, certainly, find it there this morning, and would post it on his way to the office, in which case—yes, if he caught the country post—she would get it at four o'clock.

Hope, the deceiver, again lifted its drooping head and smiled into the girl's eyes.

Her face was almost bright as she ran upstairs to the little bedroom with the roses nodding in at the window, and the man's portrait smiling at her from the wall, and put on her hat.

She would go down to the village and take some soup for old Betsy; it would help to pass the time, and—*he* had been down to Betsy's cottage with her one morning, and the old woman had given them both a glass of her famous cowslip wine, and told them stories of her own courtship, and showed them the treasures in her tiny front parlour—the dried seaweed, which was a souvenir of her one and only visit to the sea, and the wax flowers under a glass shade on a plush stand in the place of honour on the centre table.

How huge he had looked in that tiny room, and how afraid she had been every time he moved that his great shoulders would knock one of the cherished texts from the walls, or that he would upset the neatly-arranged heaps of cheaply-bound books that ornamented the centre table.

And when Betsy had departed in search of the cowslip wine, he had tilted her face up to his and kissed her.

The memory sent a little thrill to the girl's heart—she had never, somehow, got used to being kissed by Rupert, though they had been engaged nearly six months—it still made her feel a little afraid because it also made her feel so happy.

Her eyes fell on the bareness of her left hand—she had taken off his ring that night they had quarrelled, a week ago, and had said she would not wear it again till he said he was sorry.

Sorry! What was there to be sorry for?—what had he done that mattered in the least, when the whole happiness of both their lives was weighed in the balance against it?

She turned from the looking-glass where she had been regarding her reflection with accusing eyes, and looked at the man's portrait.

"Oh, why *won't* you write to me?" she appealed forlornly.

After all, she would *not* go down to Betsy's—it would only remind her more of him, and she would not be able to bear it.

She took off her hat and went restlessly down the stairs again. Would the day *never* pass?

* * * * *

The doctor came home to his lunch at half-past two. The old grey horse jogged him up to the door, and went off contentedly with the pudding-faced boy to be fed before starting on the afternoon round.

The doctor changed his coat for a linen jacket, kissed his daughter, said grace, and took up the carving-knife.

"Been busy, father?"

Rose never forgot to ask the question that had always been her mother's first tender inquiry.

"Yes, my dear, tolerably so." The doctor spoke with a preoccupied air. "Mrs. Jones has two of the boys down with the measles, and Tom Brawlie has cut his foot badly with a scythe, and the Smith baby had convulsions last night." He paused to help himself to salad. "That reminds me, Rose, I have some bad news for you."

Had he been looking at his daughter he would have seen how the colour deserted her face, leaving her as white as her dress, but he was looking past her out of the window with grave eyes.

Under cover of the tablecloth Rose clasped her hands together in mute agony. What was he going to tell her? It was Rupert, of course. Something had happened—he had heard something—couldn't he speak—why couldn't he speak?

The doctor went on gravely.

"It's that poor young Gaynor—a terrible thing—I only heard as I drove through the village on my way home—they were sending for me. It happened this morning, or, rather, they only knew this morning."

"Not—not—*dead?*" said Rose aghast. "Why—he and Jess Everitt were to have been married next month."

The doctor nodded gravely.

"Dead—yes, poor fellow—dead," he said. "It appears he rode over to see Jess last night, and started back about half-past ten. The horse got home without its rider, and they found young Gaynor outside Helpton Woods this morning—dead! The horse must have thrown him; at any rate, his neck was broken. I should say he had been dead some hours when they found him. It's a terrible thing—terrible thing—that poor girl!"

He broke off.

Rose said nothing. The terrible tension that had seized her at her father's first words had relaxed, but it left her white and cold.

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Dead!—that boy dead!—with all his life before him, all his happiness lying so close at hand! And Jess—Jess left behind—alone.

Supposing it had been Rupert! Supposing — supposing something *had* happened to Rupert, and that was why he did not write?

If there were no letter by the four o'clock post; if it did not come—oh, after this, she would trample on her own paltry pride and write to him.

She drew a deep breath, as if she had been stifling, and had suddenly come out into pure, fresh air.

The doctor had finished his lunch and risen.

"You must go and see Jess, my dear," he said. "I told them I would send you; she has no mother, you see." He sighed. "And at such a time a girl must want her mother badly—badly."

He went out hurriedly, and presently, through the open window, she saw him drive off again. Then Rose went upstairs, and put on her hat, kissed the man's portrait, and went out towards the village.

"Oh, that he might be given back to me—for one day, one hour! Only just for one minute—one little minute!"

The drawn blinds of the house seemed to strike her heart with sudden desolation. Death!—in the midst of this lovely summer day!

As she crossed the darkened hall, a curious feeling seized her that this trouble was her own—that she was going to see her own sorrow.

The dreadful hush that always fills a house that has been visited by death filled her with panic. She wanted to cry out, or run away; but she went on, and presently found herself face to face with the girl who had lost everything that made life beautiful.

"Jess—oh, poor little Jess!" she said. She hastened across the room, and put her arms about the girl who sat with a face of such stony misery, staring before her.

She shrank a little from the warm, impulsive grasp.

"He's dead," she said. "Did they tell you—he's dead!"

She spoke in a curious, far-away voice, as if she were listening to the words being repeated in the distance by someone else, but as if they conveyed nothing to her.

"Oh, Jess, Jess!" said Rose pitifully, tears running down her face.

The elder girl looked at her with something like amazement.

"You can cry, too," she said. "They all seem to cry except me, and I loved him best. We were to have been married next month; and last night—was it last night? It seems a hundred years ago? She paused dazedly. "Yes, it was last night; we quarrelled, Rose, and I told him that I didn't love him any more—yes, I did. I remember the exact

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words I said. I told him I did not ever want to see him again. I never shall now, shall I? And yet I can't cry; it doesn't seem to matter—nothing matters."

She lifted one hand to her eyes, as if trying to force herself to see this terrible thing that had befallen her.

The tears on Rose's cheeks seemed dried in a sudden flush of horror and pity.

They had quarrelled. She had said she never wanted to see him again; and he was dead—dead!

That was what *she* had said to Rupert a week ago.

She looked at the cold face of the girl before her with terror in her eyes.

She tried to think of some words of comfort to say, but none would come; the only thought in her mind was that it might have been Rupert, that this broken-hearted girl before her might have been herself.

There was something more terrible than death in the silence that filled the room. There was that awful, despairing remorse that comes with the knowledge that it is too late—too late to take back the hard word spoken, too late to ask forgiveness, too late to be sorry, too late for everything but despair.

Then Jess Everitt flung aside her friend's hands, as if she could not bear their pitying touch, and rising to her feet, sent an anguished cry into the silence.

"Oh, that he might be given back to me—for one day, one hour! Only just for one minute—one little minute.—Oh, my darling, come back to me!"

* * * * *

The grey, soft shadows of evening were stealing like grey ghosts about the little village, when Rose Atherton made her way homewards.

Her face was pale, and her eyes heavy with weeping, but there was a softened look about her, a hurrying gladness in her steps.

She had learnt a lesson that day which she would never forget. It had come to her all at once how terribly short life is, how few years of happiness there are for each one—a few years, and then nothing but the awful loneliness of separation such as had fallen upon her friend.

If there were no letter for her, she would write to him, she would be the first to say "I am sorry," and he would forgive her, and they would never quarrel again.

Her face was aglow with eagerness as she ran into the house.

The boys were all home; their satchels were flung down in the hall, their four caps, all in various stages of shabbiness, hung at different angles on the hat-rack. She could hear their voices calling to one another in the garden.

She went into the dining-room, her eyes turning eagerly to the mantelshelf where the letters were always put.

Yes, there was one, a square patch of light in the dusky room.

She fled across the room, stumbling against a chair in her eagerness, and seized it, but it was not the letter, it was not the well-known square, grey envelope, it was not for her.

She put it back mechanically against the clock, and groping blindly found a chair and dropped into it, hiding her face.

All the horror of the afternoon rushed back upon her, the darkened house of mourning, the terrible cry that had broken from Jess Everitt's lips, and her own heart seemed to echo it.

"Oh, that he might be given back to me! My darling, come back to me!"

A step sounded in the hall, and with a sudden dread of being seen, of having to face the boys' inquisitive eyes, Rose fled out into the garden through the long window.

The steps quickened and followed; she heard them come down the path behind her, but she ran on, with a hopeless feeling that she must get away alone, but the steps followed persistently, followed and overtook her.

She turned desperately, and then out of the dusk a man's strong arms took her into their keeping, a tender, yet masterful hand turned her face upwards.

"Dearest!" said the voice she had so longed to hear, a little shaken from its usual steadiness, "I have come to say I am sorry. You must forgive me; I can't bear it any longer. Every night I have tried to write to you, but I couldn't; then I knew I must come and tell you, tell you that nothing in the world matters except our love for each other. Dearest, will you forgive me?"

But there was no need for the girl to speak; he read her answer in the gladness of her eyes, and the tremulous lips that she lifted to meet his kiss; then the last grey glimmer of daylight flickered out behind the trees and left them in the scented darkness.

The Longest Day was at an end.

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THE WHIP-HAND

An astonishing and spectacular feat—skipping with whiplashes for skipping-ropes.

An Account of Extraordinary Performances with a Stock-Whip Given by Mr. Fred Lindsay, the Champion of Australia.

By Stanley White.

Way back in the Never, Never country—the wilds of Australia—at a place called Ford's Bridge, there is a lean-to shanty. On a certain day a few years ago half-a-dozen red-shirted Colonials were having a friendly glass together, and the conversation turned on what could be done with the stock-whip.

One of the number bragged that he could do "seventeen cuts" more than any other man on the continent. "Seventeen cuts" is merely an expression to convey the idea of overwhelming superiority in the matter of whip-cracking.

A noisy argument followed. Suddenly a youth of nineteen, who had been sitting all by himself, came forward and startled the company by offering to bet ten pounds that he could easily beat the braggart. Of course, the offer was immediately accepted by the boaster, who congratulated himself on falling into a soft thing. The company immediately went outside, and the clever man treated his audience to an exhibition of the "Sydney Flash."

The "Sydney Flash" consists of two cracks in front, two behind, and two in front again, all done in lightning style. It is a showy feat, not without danger to the operator. There are twenty-four feet of whipcord to control, attached to a handle of eighteen inches.

You can see men on the cattle stations minus an eye through trying tricks like the "Sydney Flash."

However, the "Flash" went off safely on this occasion, and several other similar flashes. And then they let the boy have his chance.

Before he finished he fairly knocked the conceit out of the man who claimed to "know it all." As he paid up the ten pounds he sadly remarked that he didn't bargain to play "God Save the King" on the whip, anyhow.

The hero of that occasion is Mr. Fred Lindsay. Recently he chanced to be in

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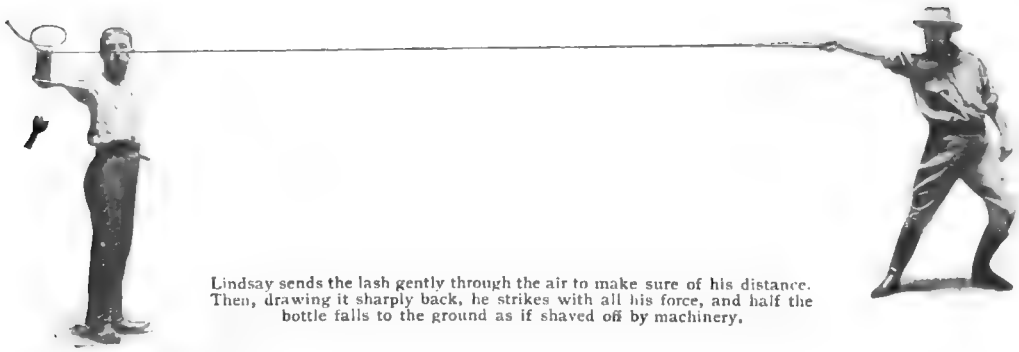


Lindsay sends the lash gently through the air to make sure of his distance. Then, drawing it sharply back, he strikes with all his force, and half the bottle falls to the ground as if shaved off by machinery.

London on private business, and the management of the Hippodrome got to hear of him, and induced him to give Londoners a sensational exhibition of his powers.

But there was one difficulty, that of getting subjects courageous and confident enough to submit themselves to the operations of his deadly lash. However, there are people who will do almost anything for money nowadays, and a beautiful young girl and a man consented to be subjects in these William-Tell-like performances.

Imagine a scena in the Australian bush. Sections of tree-trunks lie around; there are the log huts, and groups of excited, top-booted men and one or two Colonial girls gathered about, eager to see Fred Lindsay wield his wondrous whip.

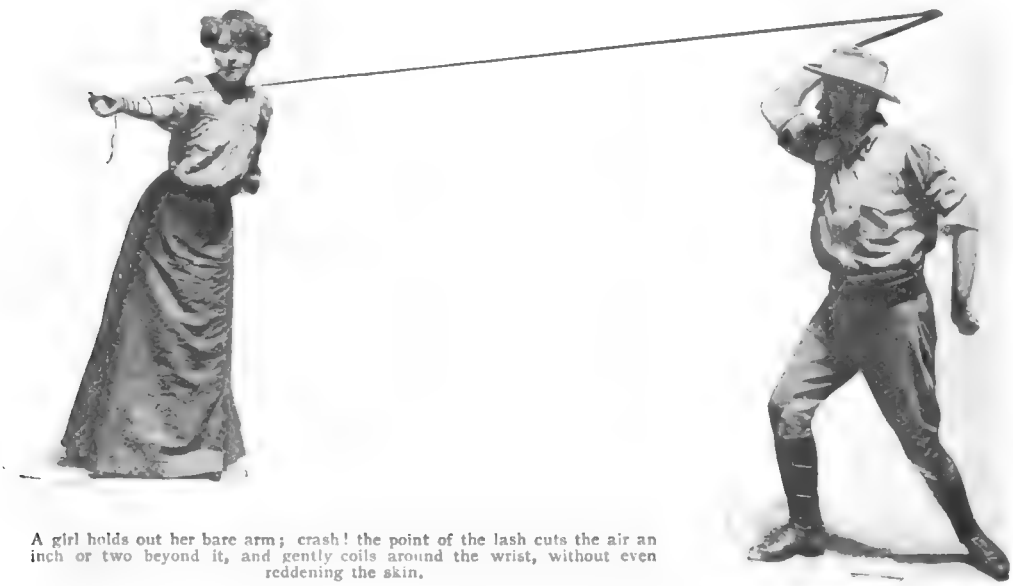
"Now then, Fred, give us the 'Sydney Flash,'" yells a typical bushman with a fuzzy beard.

Into the centre steps the hero. He bends his body as if to make a spring. The huge coil glides swiftly inwards like a darting snake. Now he is erect; the air is rent as if by pistol shots; half turning on his heel the lash flies over his head to the rear: crack, crack, then two more again. It is over in perhaps three seconds.

"Here, crack this bottle," suggests one of the crowd, the bearded bushman. "And you, Bill, hold it up while he does it. You ain't afraid, are you? Fred—he don't make a mistake."

Bill is not the lad to show the white feather before ladies, and steps forward, holding the massive bottle at arm's length. Small wonder if he trembles slightly, for he knows that the whip can sever his wrist as easily as it can cut the bottle.

Lindsay is twenty-five feet distant, his keen eye fixed on the exact spot. To make



A girl holds out her bare arm; crash! the point of the lash cuts the air an inch or two beyond it, and gently coils around the wrist, without even reddening the skin.

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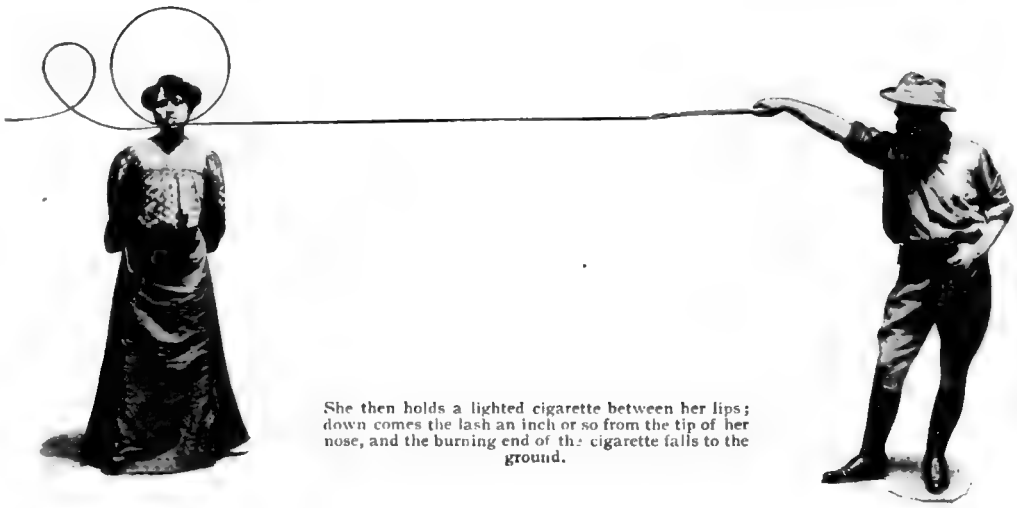


She then holds a lighted cigarette between her lips; down comes the lash an inch or so from the tip of her nose, and the burning end of the cigarette falls to the ground.

sure of his distance he sends the lash gently through the air with a soft, sibilant sound, then, drawing it sharply back, he strikes with all his force, and half the bottle falls to the ground as though shaved off by machinery.

Now steps forward a young girl, determined to show that pluck is not a monopoly of the male sex. Holding out a pretty, rounded arm she challenges Fred with her eyes to do his best.

Crash!—the point of the lash has cut the air an inch beyond her arm, then gently coils around it like a snake without its sting.

Somebody offers her a cigarette. Daintily she places it between her lips and lights it.

"Now then, girl, show 'er pluck," roars a bearded Colonial. "Cut that 'ere cigarette in two," continues this cold-blooded individual.

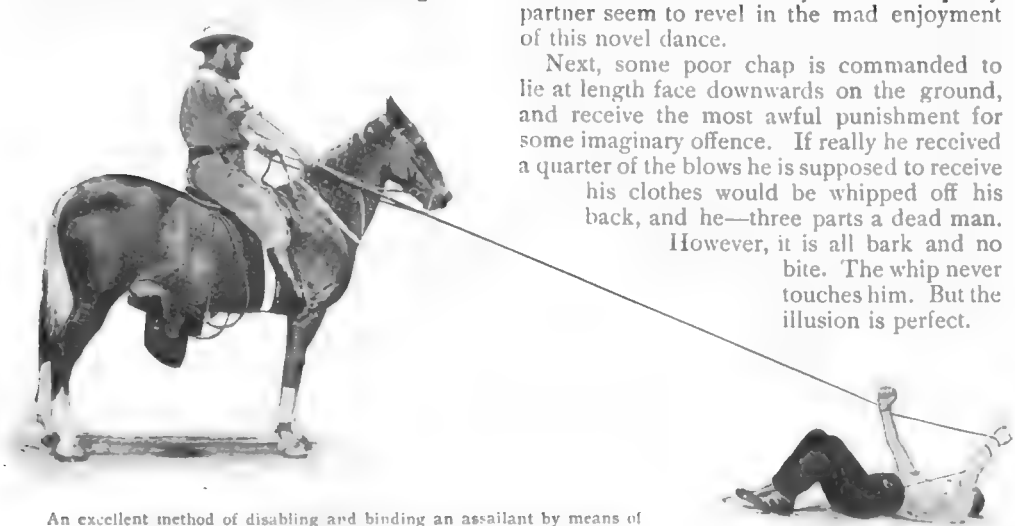
Will she dare this also? One shudders to think of the havoc that an unskilful stroke would make of those flower-like features. With a saucy air of defiance she places her hands on her hips, and puffs gaily away at her cigarette.

Down comes the cruel lash, an inch or so in front of the little tip-tilted nose, and, lo—the smoking end of the weed lies upon the ground. Then Lindsay does a very pretty thing.

"Now then, Lily," he says, "come and have a skip."

For the next few moments there is a perfect hurricane of whip-cracking. At every skip the lash flies under her feet and away over her head. Both Lindsay and his pretty partner seem to revel in the mad enjoyment of this novel dance.

Next, some poor chap is commanded to lie at length face downwards on the ground, and receive the most awful punishment for some imaginary offence. If really he received a quarter of the blows he is supposed to receive his clothes would be whipped off his back, and he—three parts a dead man. However, it is all bark and no bite. The whip never touches him. But the illusion is perfect.



An excellent method of disabling and binding an assailant by means of the stock-whip.

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The Story of a Smart Piece of Amateur Detection.

By George Hibbard.

Newington Butts proceeded with the air of profound absorption which characterised him. The day was bright and pleasant. The road presented the usual picture of peace and well-being.

But—was not mystery to be met everywhere? Did not the darkest secrets lie under the most smiling aspects? Beneath the most innocent exterior were not the guiltiest purposes concealed? He knew that because a thing or a person appeared thus was the very reason for suspecting that it was not so. The undiscerning, the unobservant, the unanalytical might be deceived. He—never.

The time might be the practical present. Still, he was aware that, despite the prosaic condition of modern existence, events as strange as ever were hourly taking place. This might be every-day England, but life was even more varied and complicated here than elsewhere, and out of the jumble arose situations as weird and remarkable as in the wildest or most outlying corners of the world. He realised that for those who observed with true discernment, the most insignificant facts or things offered endless suggestions.

He knew that the unexpected was lurking everywhere, and in the most unlikely places. Had he not a library of detective lore in his apartments which he had diligently studied? Was he not intimately familiar with the ways of all the past masters in the art of detection, both of fiction and history?

Was he not "up" on every precedent and practice? Moreover, had he not triumphs of his own behind him? His whole life, in fact, was spent in seeking chances to gain further laurels. Constantly, therefore, he kept his eyes on the look-out for other problems to conquer.

Almost everyone, to be sure, regarded him as a wealthy idler. Few understood what tangled webs he had unwound—what hard nuts he had cracked. The world was, in fact, even sceptical as to the existence of the frequent enigmas demanding his attention. His closest friend, Gerald Blake, doubted that the way was strewn with ever-pressing puzzles.

"Certainly nothing doing to-day," Blake remarked, as he sauntered along by Newington Butts' side.

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"One never can tell," Butts replied darkly. "I come on the paradoxical and unaccountable at every turn. The merest trifle gives me an inkling. Perhaps it is only a footprint. Possibly nothing but the turn of a hair. Conceivably merely a piece of paper blowing across the way——"

He stooped and picked mechanically up a scrap which had eddied to his feet, suggesting his last illustration.

Inattentively he smoothed it out. Then he looked more closely and exclaimed:

"By Jove!"

"What is it?" Gerald asked.

For answer, Newington gravely placed the bit of flotsam in his hands.

"I'll be hanged!" Blake ejaculated as he stared in surprise. What his eyes beheld was sufficiently bewildering. Written in a good, and even distinguished handwriting, incredulously he read:

Rwlmlgpmlddszgnzbyvgsivzgmrmt K i vkvizgrl-
mhzivyvrmtnzwy.lsrxsgviiirubmb Uilnnbkir-
hlmdrmwld Roilgsilftsgsvnlipvwwvzwycznx-
hvblugsvtivzglzpzygsvirtbvooldvztovzmvnvv-
ogsvlu Uivvwln Gsrhrhgsv 14lu Hvkgvn-
yviRusvokwlvhmlgivgxtn.vybgdvozvnr w m r-
tsglu Gfvhwzbh.

"It's Greek to me," Blake vouchsafed.

"It's a cipher," declared Newington triumphantly.

"What does it mean?"

"That's something we must find out," Butts continued decisively. "Come, we can see about it in the club."

They advanced with more rapid steps toward the low, wide portals of the club. A moment more and in the unoccupied and silent library Newington Butts sat at a table, with several sheets of paper before him and a pencil in his hand.

Gerald Blake, as he took the first golden sip from one of the thin-stemmed glasses which the servant had brought with the paper, regarded him admiringly. Respectfully he noted the frown of determination on the other's brow as he scribbled, with pauses for reflection. He saw with interest the look of determination on Newington's countenance change to one of satisfaction, then to an expression of growing excitement; finally to an aspect of some astonishment.

"What is it?" Blake demanded quickly. "Can you make anything of it?"

"Of course," retorted Newington, with some manifestation of excitement. "All ciphers can be read by those who know how. In this instance, though, I had to use only the rudiments of the science—apply the very simplest principles."

He tendered the other the original document.

"You see," he explained, "that among the letters *v* occurs thirty-three times—the most frequently of all the letters. Now, the merest tyro knows that *e* is the letter which is employed the most; in fact, in ordinary prose the *e's* are about 12.39 per cent. of all the letters used. *T* comes next, at about 10.46 per cent. Looking at this cipher, we observe that *g* appears nineteen times, the next oftenest to *v*. This led me to believe that I was on the right track. Then I noticed five times the combination *gsv*. Now, inserting *t* and *e* where we suppose they belong, we have *t—e*. As *the* is the most usual three-letter word, and the arrangement appears five times, we must conclude that this combination stands for *the*."

"You're all right," said Blake warmly.

"That is the merest commonplace," replied Newington smiling. "The only extraordinary ability I have shown in this is in taking a short cut. I might have solved the puzzle by the usual means, but—" he waved his hand—"from the first moment a fact caught my attention. The power of the born investigator is shown in the ability to correlate. What number of letters is *e* from the beginning of the alphabet?"

"Fifth," Blake replied, after counting.

"What number is *v* from the end?"

"*v—w—x—y—z*," Blake repeated. "Fifth."

"Exactly," continued Newington Butts. "I saw that I had to deal with the simplest form of cryptography — that in which the letters of the alphabet are merely transposed."

"You're a corker!" Gerald declared earnestly.

"There were four other ways in which I could have reached the same result. But this was the shortest. Having learnt so much, to arrive at the rest was easy."

Newington held out one of the pages to Blake, who eagerly inspected what was inscribed on it:

Idonotknowwhatmaybethreatening.

Gerald stared at it uncomprehendingly.

"All that I had to do next," Butts explained, "was to separate the words."

He proffered another sheet, on which he had scrawled rapidly:

I do not know what may be threatening. Preparations are being made which terrify me. From my prison window I look through the forked dead branch of the great oak at the big yellow eagle, and feel the mockery of freedom. This is the fourteenth of October. If help does not reach me by twelve midnight of Tuesday——.

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"Great Scott!" remarked Blake succinctly, "there's something up!"

"Something," Newington remarked, "as this indicates, of a serious nature may happen unless we act. To-day is Tuesday, the seventeenth of October, clearly the day indicated. It is five o'clock in the afternoon. There is not much time."

"But," Blake objected, "we don't know much more now. We are absolutely ignorant of what we are at."

"Are we?" rejoined Newington, with an indulgent smile. "I don't see that—My motor-car is at the door. Should you like to go for a little spin?"

Blake followed Butts promptly down the stairs and out of the door. In a moment the chauffeur was displaced, Newington stationing himself at the wheel, while Blake entered the tonneau.

With the steady hand and eye which made him such a perfect chauffeur, Butts dodged with the big car through the crowded afternoon traffic of the road.

Presently they were in the park, speeding over the smooth roadways. For a time Butts kept in the usual course of travel. Then suddenly he bore away by a less frequented drive into an outlying and secluded part of the domain. A bend of the lake cut it off, and the ground, although as carefully tended as all the rest, still had something of a sequestered look.

Butts steered the motor to an open space on higher ground, commanding something of a prospect. Coming to a standstill, he glanced quickly about. Blake saw his eyes brighten and a slight smile bend his lips. Immediately, with a short nod, Newington Butts sank back in the cushioned seat.

"All right," he answered.

"What's all right?" asked Gerald impatiently. "What are you shaking your head at, like an old China mandarin?"

"Don't you see?" Newington inquired, with dignity.

"Nothing in particular," persisted Blake. Newington's levelled finger indicated a certain direction.

"What is it?" Blake asked, gazing as desired.

His eyes reached and were held by a conspicuous object. An immense gilded eagle topped a pretentious drinking fountain. Blake opened his mouth and gasped:

"Really!"

Newington's unmoved countenance did not display even gratification.

"Now look farther," he commanded.

"The oak!" Blake exclaimed, as a large tree on the border of the park caught his attention. "And with a dead limb, too. You're a wonder! This must certainly be the spot—still, the exact——"

"With two points through which a line passes," Newington demonstrated, "the direction of that line is determined. Suppose anyone so placed that to his eyes yonder golden bird comes into the notch of that tree, where must such an one stand?"

"Why," replied Blake readily, "somewhere near that big building—indeed, inside it." He also pointed. "At that window, as a matter of fact."

"Precisely," Butts concluded.

"You think that is the one mentioned in the paper?" Blake inquired timidly.

"When so much supports the supposition, can we doubt it?" replied Newington.

"How did you find out?"

"When I read 'yellow eagle,' after a moment's thought I remembered at once the spreading gilded emblem on this fountain. I came here expecting to find the oak with the dead branch, and—I found this."

"Whew!" Blake gave a whistle of wonder. "You beat the—French!"

"Now," said Newington sharply, "the rest remains to be done. This is such a peculiar case that personal examination is necessary. At midnight to-night was the hour specified. We have our part to play before that time."

"What do you propose?"

"To be on the spot actually before the moment of danger."

"Isn't that rather taking the law in one's own hands?"

"Can one neglect an appeal like this, which has been directly brought to one's notice? Of course, if you don't fancy the undertaking——'

"Oh, I'm game!" Blake answered. "If it's a case of 'follow my leader,' I'm not going to crawl!"

"Very well," responded Newington briefly.

* * * * *

The night, though unclouded, was sombre as Newington brought the car to a standstill in the deeper blackness of a clump of trees overhanging the park fence.

"Better leave it here," he commented succinctly. "We might need it in a hurry."

Blake stirred uneasily, then descended slowly from the front seat.

"I suppose this is all right?" he commented doubtfully.

"One can't make omelets without breaking eggs," replied Newington with conviction. "The irregular must be met by the unusual.

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"Shut up!" suddenly ejaculated Newington, as an adjacent door was unexpectedly opened.

Our duty lies clear before us. We are obliged to assume the responsibility. It's decidedly our only course——"

"Of course, I have perfect confidence in you," replied Blake. "I know that when you undertake anything that something comes of it. Sometimes it hasn't been quite what was expected, but——"

"In the solution of any mystery there is always more or less the element of a leap in the dark."

"It's dark enough," said Blake ominously.

"All the better for us," replied Butts.

In the afternoon a brisk dash past in the car had given Newington and his companion a general idea of the neighbourhood, the immediate surroundings of the house, and of the house itself. By this brief view the safest means of approach had been found.

"Of course, if we had had time," said Butts, as they walked along, "we should have investigated a little—felt the ground—but as it is, there's nothing for it but immediate action."

A moment or two brought them across the street and into the large, tree-studded garden of the building in question. Slipping from trunk to shrub for concealment, they soon stood beneath the high, dim walls of the imposing structure.

"Looks like a prison," remarked Blake.

"Shut up!" suddenly ejaculated Newington, as an adjacent door was unexpectedly opened. Two shadowy forms appeared against the faint outglow of light.

Newington Butts and Blake instantly slipped behind the screen of a thick evergreen within easy ear-shot.

"The job had better be done when the house is empty," said a man's heavy voice.

"Can yer manage it?" asked a woman, whom Newington and Blake judged, from her low tone, to be young.

"Easy," the other muttered. "The party's going away for three days. The thing can be put through then."

"It'll take time," the woman suggested.

"I've got to break through that brick wall. What I'll find on the other side I don't know."

"Remember what happened the last time," the woman warned. "Oh, yer'll be careful?"

"When I nearly got caught because the

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stain showed on the wall from the clumsy way I did it? I've got more experience now."

"Of course yer have," the woman said, with unmistakable approbation. "Mind yer make this pay."

"They call us thieves," he chuckled. "I'm not going to have the name without the gain."

"We need the money," she continued. "Remember for what. I'll just be walkin' to the gate with yer."

As the speakers departed down the path the two watchers emerged from the concealment of the trees.

"There's some bad work afoot," stammered Blake. "That's certain."

"I think," answered Newington Butts, "taking one thing with another, remembering the scrap of paper and having in mind the conversation which we have just heard, we may conclude that this establishment is worthy of our attention."

"I'll do whatever you say," Blake asserted with enthusiasm.

"Then," commanded Butts, with suppressed vigour, "up and at 'em! Chance has given us the opportunity."

He led the way up the steps to the half-closed door.

"We'll just have a little look about."

Without widening the opening, he crossed the threshold, followed quickly by Gerald. On a plain board table a candle with a long wick in a tin candlestick burnt sootily. By the faltering light a glance disclosed the interior of a kitchen.

"We can't stay here," Gerald suggested.

"No," Newington replied.

Even as he spoke he seized the other's arm and drew Blake through a doorway into absolute darkness. The woman was returning. She advanced towards the table and reached for the candle. A young, black-eyed, red-cheeked Irish girl stood in the revealing light.

"She looks harmless enough," Gerald muttered with hardly moving lips.

"You never can tell," Newington replied with equal caution.

The young woman, having with a beguiling tone lured a large black cat from underneath a chair, proceeded with difficulty to induce it to withdraw through the door which she had not closed. The animal having made a deliberate and dignified exit, she shut the portal and locked it. With the candle in her hand, she departed, humming in a low voice:

"For they're hanging men and women for the wearing of the green."

Newington stepped cautiously into the deserted kitchen. In the dense blackness he could not see Blake, who, he felt, stood beside him. The silence was absolute.

"Now's the time," Butts murmured.

"What are you going to do?"

"Find out what there is to find out. Among other gifts, the ideal detective should have a perfectly developed geographical instinct. I have it to an unusual degree. With a glance at the building I understood the plan of it. I have that plan in my head now. Up these stairs, customarily, I have no doubt called the 'back stairs,' is a hall. This hall opens into a larger hall. In that hall is the door of the room the window of which we marked. All seems quiet. We'll just slip up and see what there is to see."

"Very well," said Gerald philosophically. "I suppose one might as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb. There won't be much more bail required if one is found in an upper hallway than in a lower kitchen."

"Come on," Newington directed.

Progress upward was slowly and cautiously made. The inability in the utter obscurity to distinguish anything made a mis-step probable. Gerald Blake's heart beat loudly as he stole onward behind his intrepid leader. By touch of hand, the fact that the upper floor had been reached was finally determined. A momentary halt followed the achievement.

"This is the way," announced Newington, with undaunted calm.

The passage was long and narrow. The direction could be determined by keeping the fingers on the wall. Still, many a pitfall might await them. A proper dread of housemaids' brooms and pails counselled to even greater care. The transit of the corridor was accomplished, however, without disaster. They advanced into an open space, where they could see more clearly. A balustrade was before them, through which, shining from the first storey, appeared a dim light.

"There's the door," said Newington, as he pointed.

Gerald nodded. That, having gone so far he had given over all responsibility to Newington was manifest. That he viewed the outcome with doubt, not to say apprehension, was also evident. Newington Butts, however, was never more cool than at the approach of some doubtful crisis.

Now, with his usual expressionless placidity, he made his way down the gallery. A dozen steps brought him before the entrance in question. There he paused. The door itself was a heavy one of black walnut. The

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house was unquestionably of a past generation. The fittings and ornaments were stamped by a heaviness not to be found in the lighter household construction and adornment of the present.

All was still. In fact, the stillness was so great that Gerald Blake's quick breathing at Newington's shoulder was clearly distinguishable.

"Next?" Blake murmured.

Even Newington Butts appeared somewhat nonplussed. The purpose which marked every action was for a moment missing. He dallied as irresolutely as if he did not know how to proceed. A shut door has something of inevitable sanctity about it—the impulse to respect it is as strong as the instinct to safeguard a closed letter.

"Help me! Help me!"

The words came suddenly and unmistakably from beyond the panels. They were uttered in a feminine voice, beseechingly and hurriedly, but with muffled distinctness.

Newington Butts glanced at Blake. In his eyes was apprehension—moreover, a light, subdued exultation. The gratification of the master workman in the moment of successful attainment was evident.

Without an instant's hesitation he tapped gently on the door.

A subdued exclamation immediately followed within the room. A short rustle and rattle quickly succeeded. Once more stillness rested over all.

Suddenly Gerald seized Butts' elbow. His finger was directed to the keyhole.

The key was in the keyhole.

At once Newington's finger was on it, attempting to turn it. The key did not move.

"Perhaps it's not locked," Blake suggested.

Newington swiftly but carefully threw back the barrier.

He and Gerald Blake found themselves gazing into the softly-lit interior of a charmingly-furnished boudoir. In the middle stood two very pretty girls in the lace and satin of elaborate tea-gowns. A small table was between them. On this rested a chafing-dish. The spirit-lamp was flaming up, threatening to overflow and set things on fire.

"Oh!"

A soft scream burst from the rosy lips of the smaller of the astonished maidens.

"Man! Men——"

"Sally, keep still!" commanded the other and taller sternly. She was seriously frightened, but managed to control herself better.

Newington Butts, with his ever-ready presence of mind, stepped forward swiftly but with certainty. He bent and blew out the mounting flame. Then he stood erect.

"You cried for help," he said to the terrified maidens.

"Yes—yes," the taller and more composed explained hurriedly. "We were making some fudge. The lamp was burning up. I couldn't put it out. I called to— Oh, what are you doing here? Are you burglars?"

"Do we look like it?" Newington demanded indignantly.

"No," she replied, studying the two critically. "You don't!"

"Oh, Isabelle, the others have heard!" Sally exclaimed. "They are coming up. Oh, what will happen?"

Indeed, the opening and shutting of doors, the hum of increasing voices, sounded distinctly.

"Of course, you *are* burglars, though," said Isabelle. "Oh, why *don't* you run away?"

"We'd better, you know," Gerald Blake remarked decidedly.

But even as he turned, he saw that retreat was cut off. In the outer hall, darting white figures appeared. Soft screams and exclamations indicated only too clearly that the other occupants of the house were astir.

"It's all right. We're all right," assured Newington. He stepped to the mantelpiece and quickly picked up a photograph resting there. "You have here a picture of Jim Holywell. He's one of my best friends."

"Oh, do you know him?" exclaimed Isabelle, clasping her hands. "I met him a great deal in the summer. We—saw a good lot of each other. Afterwards we had a misunderstanding. He thinks I am horrid. Then I was sent off to school because of him. I was not allowed to write. All his letters were returned to him. I do not know where he is. He does not know where I am."

"I'll telegraph to Jim to-morrow," said Newington reassuringly.

The commotion outside the black walnut door was increasing. Exclamations and questions followed one another in every shaky soprano and tremulous contralto tone. All at once the entrance to the room was blocked by a compact mass of femininity in the most hastily-donned garments, with hair in every stage of disarray.

Newington Butts and Gerald Blake found themselves facing a tall, stern female in a straight, dark dressing-gown, which gave her

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"That will do," observed Miss Crittenden briefly.

something of the appearance of a familiar of the Inquisition.

"We are merely women," she declared impressively, "but we are not intimidated. You had better yield."

"Certainly," answered Newington, with his usual presence of mind, "of course. It's all a mistake. If you will allow me to explain——"

"I am prepared to listen," she answered, with a judicial manner.

"In the first place, where are we?" Newington demanded.

"This," replied the dragon, "is Miss Alva Steele Crittenden's Seminary for Young Ladies. I am Miss Alva Steele Crittenden, the principal."

"Jemima!" exclaimed Blake softly.

"You will let me give you the facts," continued Newington, with his habitual calm suavity. "I came here with the idea of rendering assistance."

He offered the scrap of paper which he had deciphered to the threatening principal.

"Your handwriting, Miss Nickerson," remarked that official, looking with surprise at the shorter of the two girls, now clinging terrifiedly together. "What," she asked, turning to Newington, and at the same time quelling Gerald with a glance, "am I to understand by this rigmarole?"

"The steps by which I arrived at the true significance would take too long to give," Newington replied; "but the result would at once satisfy anyone with your logical and discerning mind."

Miss Crittenden's frown grew one shade less dark.

"You may," said Newington, "take my word for it this is what it means."

He offered the transcription.

"'Preparations are being made,'" read Miss Crittenden. "'My prison window—the big yellow eagle. Midnight of Tuesday.' Do I see aright, Miss Nickerson?" she demanded, holding out the paper first given her. "Did you write this balderdash?"

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"Yes—please, Miss Crittenden, I did," responded the smaller girl, advancing with great trepidation but visible courage. "I was very foolish. You see, Isabelle and I made up our minds to write a novel. It was to be in the form of letters, and I was to write all the correspondence of the girl. This is what I—or—the Countess Jacqueline de Beauvoir wrote in cipher to escape the eyes of my—her captors, when I—she was imprisoned in the tower of the Castle of Rothenberg-Schwartzwald——"

"That will do," observed Miss Crittenden briefly.

"I wasn't satisfied with it, and tore it up," continued Miss Nickerson bravely, "and I suppose this gentleman found it."

"I did," said Newington.

"As," observed Miss Crittenden, who had been cogitating deeply, "there has been this regrettable misunderstanding, and as I do not desire notoriety concerning this incident in connection with the Seminary—" She concluded abruptly: "Gentlemen, you may go."

"Thank you!" ejaculated Blake fervidly.

"But," Miss Crittenden resumed, "how did you enter?"

"I——" began Newington, and, as his eyes rested on the small Irish maid on the edge of the crowd, he paused.

"Sure," said the girl, edging forward, "I suppose they just stepped up when I went down to the gate to be saying 'good-night' to Pat Brennan."

"Who?" the principal demanded.

"Me young man who dropped in to see me."

"Norah, you are dismissed. Your plumber will have no more work from me."

"Sure, I was goin', anyway," said Norah. "An' I had about made up my mind to give notice to take me leave—seein' that Pat has been after settin' up for himself. He was jus' tellin' me the elegant job he had, that would be bringin' him money to give him an' me a good send-off."

"Silence!" commanded Miss Crittenden. "And—gentlemen—I have already informed you once that you may depart in peace."

As the car sped through the park, Newington Butts and Gerald Blake were silent for a time.

"When I saw Jim Holywell," said Newington, "the other day in Brighton, he was a perfectly blighted being because of a girl he had met and could not find again."

"It must be this Isabelle," observed Blake.

"Certainly," answered Butts sharply. "I saw that at once. To-night we have undoubtedly been the means of smoothing the course of one case of true love, at least."

"You forget Norah and Pat Brennan," added Blake. "We did a little there in the way of 'Come, haste to the wedding.'"

"Then," affirmed Newington, "I believe that we may conclude that our evening has not been altogether ill-spent."

A DOLEFUL DITTY.

Dolly is a charming girl,
Oh, so sweet and pretty;
If she were not, then should I
Never pen this ditty.

Dolly is beloved by me,
Even so is Kitty;
Save for this I should not write
Such a doleful ditty.

Dolly is more beautiful,
Kitty is more witty;
Which is partly why I write
This eventful ditty.

I, not knowing which to choose,
Waited—more's the pity;
But for this I might have made
Quite another ditty.

While I waited, both had found
Lovers in the city;
Thus it was I came to write
This unlucky ditty.

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MR. —HIS PAGES.

Autumnal October, abounding
In rapid and riotous rain,
Claims querulous curses, confounding
The winter that's with us again.
Hail heavens the colour of ashes!
Hail fog that the Londoner loathes!
Hurrah for the hansom that splashes
His mud on our clothes.

At football, unclean yet delighted,
Contusions the stripling incurs,
Or watches while Sheffield United
Attempt to demolish the 'Spurs.
And good "Mr. X," while he blesses
The victors who quarter the spoil,
On the world's heated bearings expresses
His wonderful oil.

Puzzle Penknives, Puzzle Purses, or Packs of ROYAL Playing Cards, will be given as prizes to readers who forward new puzzles, problems, or other tricks which are inserted in this feature. All readers communicating with "Mr. X." and wishing for a reply should inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Letters should be addressed to "Mr. X" (care of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE), 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A NOVEL SQUARE WORD.

In the July number "Mr. X" offered a prize of five shillings for the best square word on the lines of a given example which should reach him before July 22nd. The square word given was quite a simple one, and merely sufficed to show the form which attempts should take, namely, that one set of diagonals should only contain one letter.

Though fairly successful as regards the number of entries, "Mr. X" can recall few competitions where the standard of merit has been more conspicuously and consistently mediocre. Competitors, unfortunately, imitated "Mr. X's" example far too closely, with the result that no one attempted, for instance, to introduce any topical or *apropos* idea into his attempt.

The example :

T A R E
A R E A
R E A R
E A R S

was extremely popular, about seventy-five per cent. of the entries taking this form. Indeed, the word squares were, without exception, extremely obvious; and "Mr. X" had the greatest difficulty, after perusing many hundreds of attempts as many times, in selecting the winner.

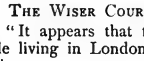
In the end he awarded the five shillings to Mr. B. Gauntlett, 105 Princess Street, Edgware Road, London, N.W.; and a consolation prize of a pack of cards to Mrs. Conington, Betham Lodge, Charlotte Street, Leamington.

THE WISER COURSE.

HIGGS: "It appears that they refuse to bury people living in London at Brompton Cemetery."

WIGGS: "That seems a foolish restriction."

HIGGS: "Oh, no; they think it better to wait till they are dead."



Q. Why is a rabbit with a family like a famous modern inventor?
A. Because she's a ma-coney (Marconi).

A TRICK WORTH TRYING.

Offer to do a wonderful conjuring trick, and work your audience up to a high pitch of expectancy. Then borrow three hats, and place them on a table with a piece of bread beneath each hat.

You now propose that you shall eat all the bread and then make it all reappear beneath any one of the three hats which may be chosen

Consume the bread with awful solemnity, and then request someone to choose which hat it shall be under.

Then place that hat on your head, and the thing is done.

HIDDEN GEOGRAPHY.

My first is a girl, but not a "he,"
My second a part of the verb "to be";
My third is to drink by tiny drops;
My fourth is in pie, but not in crops.
My whole can be found, I beg to say,
Towards the south of the U.S.A.

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Marvellous Arithmetic.

Can you prove that $0 \div 0 = 10$? It is really very simple, although apparently hard. This is the way it is done:

$25 - 25 = 0$, and $5 - 5$ also $= 0$

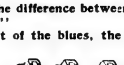
Now, $\frac{25 - 25}{5 - 5} = \frac{5^2 - 5^2}{5 - 5}$

But $\frac{5^2 - 5^2}{5 - 5} = \frac{(5 + 5)(5 - 5)}{5 - 5}$

Also $\frac{(5 + 5)(5 - 5)}{5 - 5} = 10$

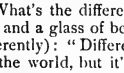
Therefore, $0 \div 0 = 10$

Quite simple, isn't it?



Q. What is the difference between "depression" and "a damper."

A. One is a fit of the blues, the other is a bit of the flues.

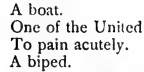


The Difference.

Foggs: "What's the difference between a glass of water and a glass of beer?"

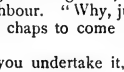
Loggs (reverently): "Difference! All the difference in the world, but it's very hard to express adequately. What would you say it was?"

Foggs: "Twopence!"



A Diamond Acrostic.

A consonant.
A colour.
A boat.
One of the United States.
To pain acutely.
A biped.
A consonant.



Well Done!

"I wish I knew how to get along well," sighed an unfortunate man.

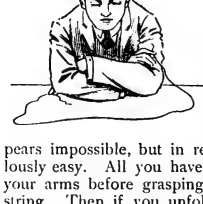
"How to get a long well," exclaimed a facetious neighbour. "Why, just get one of these artesian chaps to come and bore you one."

"Suppose you undertake it," replied the disconsolate man; "you might do it with some of your jokes."

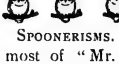
A String Trick.

The other day a friend showed "Mr. X" a very neat and interesting trick, which requires for its performance merely a willing subject and a piece of string.

The problem put before the subject is to take either end of a piece of string between the thumb and forefinger of each hand, and then tie a knot in it without letting go.

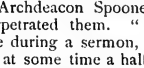


This task at first sight appears impossible, but in reality it is ridiculously easy. All you have to do is to fold your arms before grasping the ends of the string. Then if you unfold them, lo! and behold a knot in the centre of the string.



Q. Why is a mouse like a load of hay?

A. Because the cat'll eat it.



Spoonerisms.

No doubt most of "Mr. X's" readers have heard of Spoonerisms, named after the celebrated Archdeacon Spooner, who continually perpetrated them. "My friends," he said once during a sermon, "which of us has not felt at some time a half-warmed fish in his bosom"; meaning, of course, "a half-formed wish." "Mr. X" feels convinced that there are many excellent Spoonerisms in existence besides this one; and so he offers a prize of five shillings for the best which is submitted to him on a postcard before October 22nd. Postcards should be marked "Spoonerism," and addressed to "Mr. X," care of The Royal Magazine, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Q. Why is a candle maker the most sinful and unfortunate of men?

A. Because all his works are wicked, and all his wicked works are brought to light.

ANSWERS.

Hidden Geography: Mississippi.

A Diamond Acrostic:

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Cause or . . Just . . . . Impediment.

The Story of a Best Man who Became Bridegroom.

By Berta Ruck.

I.

A telegram lay among the letters on my solitary breakfast-table. I took it up before opening the tailors' circulars, the demands for subscriptions, and the invitations to dull dinners which made up my post that Tuesday morning; hoped, in the way one does, that "nobody was dead," and read:

The Well Inn, Mayfield.—Wedding on Wednesday; come down at once and be best man.—Jack Lindsay.

Jack! I didn't know he was out of town. What silly practical joke was he up to now? It wasn't the first of April, but I took the precaution of wiring back to my cousin:

Whose wedding, and to whom?—John.

The reply:

Mine, of course, to an angel.—Jack.

came while I was at lunch. I surprised the little maid who brought in the wire by chuckling aloud.

To think that the flibbertigibbert of a Jack, after his long and parti-coloured career as a Flirt Immune, had been run down at last! By "an angel!" I helped myself to salt and chuckled again. I wondered how on earth the angel had managed to get him to propose; also which angel—I mean who the angel was? Probably that little blue-eyed Miss Hartley. Jack had been dancing devoted attendance upon *her* last time I ran across them. That was at Hurlingham, in June; it was now September. Yes, the dates seemed right for a short and quiet engagement to the Hartley girl. He had been wise to keep it dark, and avoid the jeers of his fellow-bachelors. Should I go down and openly exult over him to-morrow? I loathed weddings and everything connected with 'em; and a best man was expected to wear a big white buttonhole, and to make a speech, and perhaps to kiss the bridesmaids—pah! Yet it would be a grand excuse to get out of town. The whole of Piccadilly was "up," and the heat was stifling; at Mayfield I might hope to find the sunshine made bearable by fresh air.

So I took out the clipped halfpenny, which is my one mascot, and tossed it. "Heads I go, tails I don't."

Tails

"H'm. Try something else. Count the oranges in the dish on my sideboard. Odd I go, even I don't. One, two, three, four, five, six. Even; don't go."

Well! If Mrs. Parry, my landlady, came in to clear the table, I wouldn't go; if it was the little maid, I'd pack at once.

A knock at the door. Enter Mrs. Parry, processionally, with the tray.

Fate was against my going, then.

"Was your breakfast to your liking, sir?"

"Very good," said I absently. "Mrs Parry, I stay."

"Well, indeed, I'm sure I hope you weren't thinking of leaving me, Mr. Lindsay!" declared the warm-hearted Welshwoman, who spoils me as none other of her sex dreams of doing, worse luck—I mean fortunately for them.

"Mrs. Parry," I said, "I'll never leave you for more than a couple of days at a time. By

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the way, I'm going down to the country this afternoon. I shall be up again on Wednesday night or Thursday morning."

For I'd made up my mind I would jolly well defy Fate, and go down and see that other John Lindsay married and done for.

All the way from Baker Street down to Mayfield I thought about what a fool he was making of himself. Especially if the girl he was going to marry *were* Kitty Hartley. Why, he had seemed genuinely fond of her. She was different, he admitted, from "all those other girls." So why on earth couldn't he leave well alone? There is no glamour like that which flings a sort of golden radiance, don't you know, about one's old sweetheart —the girl one never married. (Even if she had a temper of her own, even if she had been unreasonable, gone off, leaving no address, after a silly tiff about nothing! For my part, I'm glad that's what happened to me.)

Why couldn't Jack surround the little Hartley with that glamour, and leave her to be a priceless memory, and all that sort of thing, after the chap had grown too old for any enjoyment but that of thinking over his past? No! Instead of letting her remain the Love of his Dreams, he would allow her to sink into the deadly commonplace of the Woman who is always There!

Poor little Kitty!

What a rotten bad husband she was going to have, by the way, in Jack. He was so confoundedly casual, you know. There was his habit of not turning up at a dance until the nicest girls' programmes were crowded with other men's names. Well, of course, it had been all the better for some of those nice girls. So had his little ways of forgetting all about appointments he had made, and of introducing the Spring Girl to the Summer Girl, and then wondering why neither of them went on taking him seriously. I hoped Miss Hartley wasn't exacting. Supposing casual Jack had got engaged to a girl like—well, the one I'd surrounded with the glamour I mentioned a few paragraphs back. Ye gods! Then I wondered how far it was from the station to the Well Inn. One couldn't expect Jack to come and meet his best man.

All the same, there, on the platform, looking, as usual, as if he had just wakened up, I saw my cousin.

"Good of you to come and meet me," said I rather pointedly as we shook hands.

"Oh, not at all," said Jack; "fact was, I came to inquire about a parcel. I didn't expect you down to-day, old chap."

"What!" I exclaimed, "with the wedding to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" echoed Jack, as we fell into step; "it isn't to-morrow, man. It's next week. Didn't I say Wednesday? Yes, I've written it down all over the place: Wednesday the 15th."

When I had finished explaining to him that to-morrow, the 8th, was Wednesday, too, and when I had enlarged upon his fatuity and folly, I recovered self-control enough to ask after Miss Hartley.

"She's all right, I suppose," said Jack rather shortly. "I haven't seen her for some time."

"What? Then aren't you—aren't you—?"

"Aren't I what?"

"Going to marry Miss Hartley? No, of course you're not. But may I ask if I know the lady?"

"Oh, by the way, I believe you do slightly," said Jack. "Yes, she said something about their having been at the same hotel in Brittany once with a man of the same name as mine. Odd, isn't it?"

"Very," said I, clearing my throat. "What's her name?" and even as I was speaking I think I guessed that his answer would be "Teresa North."

Ye gods, indeed!

He was still talking about how small the world was when I found words to congratulate him upon his taste. Miss North was one of the most charming girls, as well as the prettiest that I had ever met.

"Thank you, old chap," said Jack. "Hope you'll be friends. Thank you."

I nearly thanked *him* for having broken the news to me before he actually presented me to my old sweetheart. I mean, of course, that I might have been so taken aback by the surprise of meeting the Norths unexpectedly after all these months that I might have been suddenly dumb, or burst out into wild laughter, or something. As it was——

Well, when I walked into the drawing-room at Mayfield behind Jack and saw her sitting there behind the tea-things, I—am glad to think I was as self-possessed as she was.

She wore a white serge frock with a bunch of some fluffy, lacey excitement under her chin, and her vivid prettiness reminded me, as it always did, of every kind of carmine-coloured flower—rose-pæony, carnation, and geranium. Her eyes were as dark and deep as ever, and her little hands whiter now that the Brittany sunburn had faded from them. Jack's ring, I noticed, was of pearls. A rum

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idea to give her those; didn't he know they stood for tears? *That's* an idiotic superstition though, perhaps.

There was a crowd in the drawing-room, of relations and girl friends and what-nots. General North greeted me quite cordially, asked me why I'd never looked them up before, then drew Jack off into a heated discussion about the parcel which hadn't arrived. It turned out that Jack hadn't ordered it. I left them wrangling, and brought my chair a little nearer to the tea-table.

Then I murmured to Jack's *fiancée*, in quite a friendly, polite way: "Doesn't it seem funny that you're going to be Mrs. John Lindsay after all?"

"Yes, doesn't it!" she retorted quite viciously. (She did not mean to be "friends," then. Thank goodness!) "Almost paradoxical!"

I laughed, though I wasn't feeling very much amused.

"I don't see," she went on, "that *you've* any reason to object to it."

As if it wasn't *she* who had started the silly quarrel which cut short my holiday in Brittany a week before its time!

"I? Object?" I repeated lightly. "Why, my dear Tessa——"

Her glance pulled me up.

"Miss North, I mean," said I, "though it hardly seems worth while if I'm to call you Mrs. Lindsay in a week's time. I honestly hope," I added, with a glance towards my cousin's back, "that you'll be as happy as—as—as you expect to be."

"I am quite sure," said Tessa, her dark eyes glowering at me as if she would willingly have done me a mischief then and there with the cake-knife, "I am *quite* sure that I shall be *much happier!*"

II.

Well, it wasn't my fault that I didn't return to spend the week before the wedding under the motherly care of Mrs. Parry. Jack insisted on my putting up at the Well Inn "to see out his bachelor days"; General North seemed keen on my spending most of those days at Mayfield, where the house was now a wilderness of wedding preparations, thick with presents, littered with tissue-paper, and all a-giggle and a-flutter with bridesmaids.

I think the old chap was glad to have someone to talk to—someone who felt quite as out of it as he did. Of the bride to be we saw precious little; she was either writing to thank for presents, or being "tried on," or, I suppose, engaged in the conventional *tête-à-tête*—yah!—with her *fiancé*. Bah!

"I shall have to turn over a perfect sheaf of new leaves," said he to me in a sudden burst of confidence, as we sat up one night at the inn over a last pipe.

"Naturally," said I. "It's only what's expected."

"Teresa does expect a good deal, y'know," Jack went on thoughtfully. "Hates me to be the least bit unpunctual, or to take things for granted, or—— Her mother was an American, you know. All these American women get spoilt by their men-kind. A man who is ready to wait on her hand and foot, and to swing censers of incense round her all day—that's Teresa's idea of a husband."

"If you don't feel you want to live up to it tell her so," suggested I.

"What's the matter with you? You needn't get so ratty, man; *you're* not going to be married," said Jack, "so you needn't go and misunderstand me. Teresa's an angel, as I told you. I know that. And I know I'm jolly lucky to have her care for me as she does——"

"Does she?" I couldn't help muttering to myself, but he heard. He sat up and looked quite wide awake—for him.

"Does she? Well, I hate to brag, but——"

"Oh, go on," said I, "go on."

"Well, she practically told me I might propose about a week after I met her."

"*Eh?*"

"Fact. I met her at a tea-fight somewhere, and she began to look interested, bless her, the minute she heard my name. I'd got to fly home to dress, so we didn't have much talk, but she asked me to call at their place in Cadogan Square next day. And I forgot to go. What?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"So she was awfully cool to me next time we met. Talked about the weather and so forth. Mentioned, quite perfunctorily, that she'd met my cousin in Brittany, and then she—no, her father—asked for your address."

"Didn't you give it?"

"Hadn't got it on me, man. I never remember people's addresses, never did," declared Jack. "I gave 'em your club, though—the Orion's all right, isn't it? And then—matches please—I asked them round to tea at *my* club, the Oriel."

"Well? She—they went?"

"No. But she sent a little note to the club; it was the note that did it. She just said: 'Won't you ever forgive me for being

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horrid?—TESSA,' and she slipped a pink flower inside. I kept that flower for quite a time. And next time I came across them—a week or so after—I asked her to marry me. Any fellow would have, wouldn't he? She said 'Yes,' and—and there I was—I mean we were."

"Pretty story," said I yawning. "Good-night."

I spent the night in wondering whether Tessa could possibly have mixed up the name of Jack's club with mine. The "Orion" and the "Oriel" are fairly much alike. Could that pink flower-message have been meant to reach the Orion? I kicked the bedpost viciously as I thought that to Jack any pretty girl who had sent a message like that would have meant, for the moment, an "angel" to whom one proposed! And that the angel must needs be—Tessa!

She . . . said: "I'll give you one on Wednesday for the best man's button-hole," and then she wheeled slap round and left me.

The next day I met her, alone, on the front drive.

"How jolly those pink geraniums of yours are looking in the conservatory," I began.

"They are fine," admitted Tessa stiffly.

"I wish," said I, feeling an awful fool, "that—that you'd let me have one?"

"*Do* help yourself," said Tessa.

"What," said I desperately, "you won't even condescend, *now*, to give me a pink flower?"

She looked straight at me and said: "I'll give you one on Wednesday for the best man's button-hole," and then she wheeled slap round and left me.

I couldn't follow her after a snub like that.

That settled it. Whether or not she'd meant the flower for me, originally (and she probably hadn't), I wasn't to have another chance.

I hadn't even time to tell her that it is customary at weddings for the best man to wear, not a *pink* flower, but the white one of a blameless life. I thought of this afterwards, as I was helping to cut evergreens to festoon the porch, but I told myself I didn't care a hang about anything now. I took a positive pride in lending my personal help to every one of the preparations for that loathsome wedding.

At last the house was thoroughly transformed into a cross between Mappin and Webb's and a church bazaar; smelling of wedding-cake—their nauseating wedding-cake! Teresa's new trunks were packed and waiting in the hall; and I had forgotten

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neither the rice, the old shoes, nor the ring in the pocket of my white waistcoat. The bridesmaids (whom, to a girl, I detested) fluttered about me, tittering and asking idiotic questions about what I was going to say when I proposed their health.

Their health! I wished I could propose their immediate demise.

And suddenly Jack Lindsay elbowed his way through them, white-faced, and holding the evening paper in his hand. He dragged me aside.

"Hullo!" said I, "what's this? A full description of the wedding! Isn't it rather pre——"

"Man," he interrupted hoarsely, "there's awful news here. You remember Roy Hartley, who was at Eton with me? He's shot himself by accident. You know his sister that he lives with, and his old mother. They've no *man* to see to things for them. I shall have to go up to town at once."

"You *can't!* My dear chap, what about——"

"Oh, what does anything matter, with a thing like this? I *must* go. I'll be down to-morrow by the first train. The wedding isn't till 1.30. You explain, will you? You see to it for me; it's the best man's duty, and I've only ten minutes to catch the express up. So long!" and he was off.

Off, leaving me to explain to Tessa, to her father, and to the gaping bridesmaids that the bridegroom had been called up to London on urgent private business, and had promised to return not later than the first train in the morning.

III.

I went down to meet that first train, of course

I also met the second, and the third, which got to Mayfield at a quarter to twelve.

And still there was no sign of Jack.

I didn't know the Hartley address, so that wiring was out of the question, and I could think of nothing to do but to grasp the old General (who was purple and fuming) by the arm, and walk him away to a secluded part of the shrubbery where his comments might not be overheard by any of the bridesmaids.

Tessa hadn't come down yet.

There was one more train, the 12.52.

I flung myself into my wedding-garments before I rushed down on a bicycle to meet it.

It did not bring even a message from the defaulter; and the next train that stopped at Mayfield was the 3.5.

I fled up again to the house, my coat-tails streaming over the back wheel; I flung the bicycle on to the lawn, dashed into the hall, and then—I pulled up, and stopped dead, for Tessa, in all her bridal white, was coming slowly down the oak stairs. The bridesmaids, who had about as much co-operation and repose as a flock of frightened sheep, fluttered back and whispered together at the other end of the hall.

"Well," said Tessa quite calmly, and facing me, "has Jack come back yet?"

"No," said I. "He hasn't."

"Oh," said Tessa, giving a little pull at her veil. Under all that misty white stuff her face looked just like one of her own pink flowers caught in a snowstorm. I stared at it until suddenly I felt I dared look at her no longer, and I turned away.

"Jack can't be back now in time for the wedding," said I. The sound of my own voice surprised me; it was so ridiculously triumphant. "So," the voice went on with a laugh, "there will be no wedding to-day, Tessa!"

A second's pause. Then:

"Won't there?" retorted Tessa, with amazing coolness. "No, I suppose there won't, if we can't find a bridegroom, John."

And she threw back her pretty head with its wreath of orange-blossom, and looked me full in the face.

I answered that look. "All's fair in love," though I didn't stop to think of the proverb then.

"Tessa," I almost shouted, "Tessa, my own sweetheart!" and regardless of those blithering idiots of bridesmaids, standing there all goggle-eyed, I snatched Tessa up in my arms, tore her veil out of the way, and kissed her as I'd never kissed her yet.

And then her father, who'd exhausted his vocabulary for the present, strode in from the shrubbery, and roared, for the eighteenth time: "Has that—gulp—of a bridegroom turned up yet?"

"He has, sir," said I. "'Haste to the wedding!'"

It was absolutely correct, wasn't it?

The banns of marriage had been published between John Lindsay, bachelor, of the parish of St. James, London, and Teresa May North, spinster, of this parish. We took advantage of the hopeless muddle, which prevails even at ordinary weddings. I managed to bundle most of the party off to the church under a sort of vague conviction that Jack was already there, waiting.

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The parson was Teresa's godfather, who had only just come down for the occasion, who had never set eyes upon either Jack or me, and who seemed to hypnotise General North into "giving this woman," and so forth, before he quite knew to whom he was giving her. However, that was all right. The old chap was good enough to say afterwards that he was *glad!*

I think it must have been during the three minutes' drive back to the house that Tessa explained to me that the note at the club *was* meant for me, and that as I never answered it she thought that I thought—and I told her that, as a matter of fact, I thought that *she* thought, and she told me that when I came to Mayfield she thought I knew, and didn't care. Until that minute, when I said: "There'll be no wedding, Tessa!" and then she knew that I *didn't* know, and that nothing mattered now—and then we found ourselves sitting behind the wedding-cake—our wedding-cake!—at *our* wedding breakfast.

I pulled up, and stopped dead, for Tessa, in all her bridal white, was coming slowly down the oak stairs.

Just as some silly ass was proposing the health of the best man—of course, there hadn't been any best man—who should turn up but Jack!

It seemed that he had been sitting up with Roy Hartley (who was to recover) all night, and so, of course, he (not Roy) had overslept himself. He had then rushed to charter a special train, which should get him down to Mayfield just in time. Just in time to find that Tessa was *already* Mrs. John Lindsay. And I must say I think the fellow needn't have looked so obviously *relieved* when matters were explained to him. Why, it was a positive insult to my wife! However, as *she* forgave him, *I* had to, necessarily.

* * * * *

Jack's engagement to Kitty Hartley came about while her brother was slowly getting well. Those two used to help each other to read aloud to the invalid, and take in beef tea, and so forth. Kitty looks rather charming in an apron. The wedding is on the 5th of May, Jack told me, *or* on the 15th; he forgot which.

He also told me it was a pity I was married, as otherwise he would have asked me to be his best man!

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No. XXXIII.—INKERMAN: THE SOLDIERS' BATTLE.

From the Narrative of Sergeant Patrick Conway, late Royal Artillery.

As Told to Walter Wood.

Owing to its desperate, long, and stubborn nature, and the fact that it was for the most part a fight with cold steel, Inkerman is known as the soldiers' battle. It was fought on November 5th, 1854, the Russians numbering 40,000 and the British only 8000. For six hours the British held their ground; then 6000 French troops arrived, and the Russians retired. The loss of the Allies was more than 2500, while the Russian dead and wounded numbered 9000. Sergeant Conway, whose thrilling tale is here retold, is one of the most distinguished non-commissioned officers living. He is celebrated in the famous pages of Kinglake, and was present in every action in the Crimean Campaign. In addition to the medals for Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman, and Sebastopol, he has the coveted French gold medal, "pour valeur et discipline," specially awarded by the Emperor Napoleon for his bravery at Inkerman. The gallant veteran has been for many years bedridden at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, where, not long ago, he was specially presented to the King.

Sunday morning—a dense fog, driving rain, bitter cold, and black darkness. That was November 5th, 1854, when, on the heights of Inkerman, eight thousand ragged, starving British soldiers awaited the assault of forty thousand Russians, who advanced in the assurance of a swift and crushing victory.

The reveille had sounded, but the ring of the bugle was almost a mockery to famished and disease-stricken troops who had been so long on duty in the trenches that sleep was nearly a forgotten blessing. The notes heralded a long and bloody struggle on a battlefield so limited that the whole front of it did not extend more than three-quarters of a mile. Fifty thousand men were to fight furiously for hours, and at the end of their encounter fresh forces were to come into the fray, so that when the day was done the field of combat was a reeking shambles.

Many famous regiments and units were at Inkerman; but none, although I say it, was more distinguished than my own, G Battery, of the Royal Artillery. We were noted even in a body that had covered itself with glory since it landed in the Crimea; and of all the officers who had gained renown not one was more entitled to distinction than my own brave and beloved commander, Captain Turner.

Look at that framed printing on the wall—it is extracts from Kinglake's "Invasion of the Crimea," and tells you what the great historian thought of my superior officer. It also tells of some of the things I did myself at Inkerman and elsewhere. Yes, it fills me with pride, and helps me to bear the affliction—rheumatism from the Crimea—from which I have suffered for nearly half-a-century, and which now holds me to my bed a cripple.

My battery was posted on a height where we were open to the fire not only of the Russian artillery on land, but also of the guns of warships in the harbour, as well as the desperate onslaughts of the Russian infantry.

A fine battery we made, with our four nine-pounders and two twenty-four pounder howitzers—the composition of a field battery in those days. They were very good guns, superior to the weapons of either the Russians or the French; and Captain Turner was a born artillerist. I am not alone in saying that his marvellous handling of his battery that day had much to do with turning what seemed like a sure defeat into a brilliant and historic victory.

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We were plunged into the fight almost before we could realise what had happened. It was a straightforward struggle—a fierce hurling of brave and merciless masses against a foe as resolute and stubborn. Sheer love of life, the instinct of self-preservation, if nothing else, would have held us to our duty, for we knew that if once we were broken or abandoned our position, we and the day were lost beyond redemption.

Time after time, in that cold, clammy fog, the Russian hordes advanced; time after time they were driven back. They came towards us with their Colours flying and their drums beating, with the voices of their officers encouraging them, and with the clerical assurances that had been given them of a triumph which would end the war. And in a land of so much suffering what greater incentive could they have than that?

In the grey light the grey masses rolled upon us, and they melted as they came, for we destroyed them with both guns and rifles. Repeatedly they crossed the ravine which lay between the two armies, and struggled with all the stubborn valour of their race to annihilate us. It was a perfect hell of fighting, and it seemed as if nothing could save us from destruction.

Repeated charges had been made; men had fallen in their hundreds on both sides, and the field of conflict was littered with the dead and dying. Yet neither side gave way, no sign of surrender was given. It was hard, terrific pounding, and the hardest pounder was to be the winner. That much was certain when the battle had been raging long enough to supersede the fog of Nature with the stifling smoke of battle.

So hideous was the carnage that at last our infantry were ordered to lie down, for in shelter was their only hope of safety.

The Russian columns seemed never to lessen or be affected. Men went down, but other men took their places; battalions were annihilated, but fresh battalions were pushed forward as if from some magic forces. They had new blood, you see, to make up for their losses; but as for us, we were powerless. We had no reserves, and when a unit was destroyed its place was not filled. There were only eight thousand of us, remember; while the Russians were at least five times as strong.

Two of our battery sergeants, those who commanded Nos. 1 and 2 guns, were sent to order our infantry to lie down. We saw them go—and we saw them blown to atoms before they could obey their orders.

It was a terrible and thrilling time, Nos. 1 and 2 were dead, and I was No. 3, and so it happened that when my comrades had fallen Captain Turner called upon me to volunteer to try and do that which they had failed to accomplish.

Death appeared assured—but who at such a time, and especially a soldier, thinks of death or cares for it?

The Russians were almost at our very throats, and to keep them back it was imperative that we should fire case-shot—that is, shot which scatters at very close quarters, fan-like, and destroys all human life that is within its reach. But if our infantry did not lie down they would be annihilated as well as the enemy. Such was the position when my officer addressed me.

"Conway," said Captain Turner, "I want you to make your way to the first mounted officer you meet, and ask him to gallop along the line and order his men to lie down, so that I can fire case-shot into the Russians."

I carried out his order, then returned to my battery, and we fired with common case over the heads of our own troops, who were lying down. I do not exaggerate when I say that the advancing Russians fell like corn before the reaper. Not even their valiant infantry could withstand that storm of bullets. They wavered, they became confused, they lost heart—and before they could recover, the British battalions had sprung to their feet and hurled themselves upon them.

Only eight hundred yards separated the two forces at that stage of the battle, and in that short space there was awful carnage. A hundred Russian guns and thirty-six of our own pieces of artillery were booming deafeningly, and with it all there was the everlasting rattle of musketry.

But when the furious assaults had been repulsed, there came a strange calm. The crashes and rattling died away, and it was known that on both sides the ammunition was giving out. That did not mean cessation of the fighting—far from it. Cold steel was now needed, and it was when the bayonet and sword were wielded with such savage force that the most appalling stages of the deadly struggle came.

For a breathing space it seemed almost as if we might claim victory, and see a finish to the fight; but for a breathing space only. Scarcely had the Russians been driven back when they were upon us again, and this time they got to our very guns.

My battery was divided into two halves—the Right Half and Left Half, Nos. 1, 2, and

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3 guns forming the Right Half, and Nos. 4, 5, and 6 the Left Half.

When the Russian infantry swooped upon us we were practically defenceless, for, as I have said, our ammunition was exhausted, and we were waiting for the French gunners to come up. The Russians loomed out of the fog, and such was their determination, so great were their numbers, and so weakened were we in Turner's Battery, that for a few moments the enemy actually took possession of the Left Half.

So swift and overwhelming was the rush that our gunners were butchered where they stood, and the horses were killed or maimed on the spot. How could it be otherwise when horse and man were helpless?

But mark what happened with some of our brave fellows. They had seen too much of war to die tamely, and although they had no weapons of any sort yet they did not lose heart. They were stalwart men, with plenty of muscle and lots of pluck, and they were fighting for life itself, too, which is the greatest of all our treasures, so they fell on the Russians with their fists, and pounded them so mercilessly and savagely that the men with the rifles and bayonets actually bit the earth.

Some of them, I am certain, went down as much because of amazement as through the violent practice of the noble art of Tom Sayers. More than one fist-fighter snatched a Russian weapon and bayonetted or clubbed his man before he could rise to his feet again. It was no time for asking or giving quarter; and many acts were committed that day by Russians which put them quite beyond the pale of mercy.

In that fierce *melée* many stirring deeds were done, and there were many instances of valour and devotion. Men forgot their privations, and pulled themselves together to the end that they might save the situation, in their country's interests, and because they wished to keep their private honour unsullied. Turner's battery was famous, and it could not afford to have its reputation tarnished. That wonderful *esprit de corps*, let scoffers say what they will, has a marvellous effect at a time of peril.

For the few minutes during which the guns were held by the enemy, there was such a struggle as I had not seen before in the Crimea, nor during the rest of the war did I witness anything to exceed it in determined and ruthless ferocity. Horses, guns, and men were jumbled up in that confined and reeking battle-space, and on the thick air arose the awful confusion of a struggle to the very death.

Fists are useful weapons, especially when they belong to such gunners as ours; but of what avail are mere flesh and blood against a long bayonet at the muzzle of a rifle?

Men were borne down and slain—cruelly slain—on the wet ground, mixed up with the guns and limbers and hideous *débris* of the fight. The Russian shot had done terrible mischief to our weapons, and now even the wheels were shot away and the ammunition-waggons shattered into wrecks. The grey-coated legions showed no mercy, and in their frenzy clubbed and bayonetted almost every man they could reach.

One or two rare exceptions they made, and the rarest was in the case of a brave sergeant named Henry, who commanded No. 6 gun. Henry was a fine fellow, and was wearing his tunic, a somewhat gorgeous garment, which made him look like an officer. I myself was fighting in my blue guernsey shirt, having thrown my fine jacket off, so that I should be freer in my movements.

Convinced that Henry was an officer, the Russians set to work, not to kill him, but to take him prisoner, so that they could get the reward of so many roubles which was offered for every British officer captured. Henry fought like a fiend, slashing at them with his heavy sword, and sweeping them away in deadly fashion. They could have killed him twenty times over; but they spared him, merely playing to the point of exhaustion. At last he fell, fighting and undaunted still, and they rushed in upon him, and surrounding him as best they could in that condition, gently bayonetted him about the arms and shoulders. He resolutely defied them, and refused to yield; but by very force of numbers they made him prisoner and dragged him away from our shambles of a battery.

I saw what was happening, and knew what his fate would be. Three men had hold of him, and when just beyond the guns they put him down and left him on the sodden ground to get an escort, so that they could carry him safely to the Russian lines.

It was more than flesh and blood could endure to see my comrade dragged away like that. I looked swiftly around me and saw with thankfulness that some, at any rate, of our men survived.

I called upon two brave fellows to go with me, and sword in hand we dashed away from the guns and hurried after Henry. One of the men was shot dead almost as soon as we began our rush, but the two of us—myself

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They were stalwart men, with plenty of muscle and lots of pluck . . . so they fell on the Russians with their fists.

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and Jim McGrath—ran to the spot where Henry was lying. Startled by this unlooked-for development, his captors had halted and turned upon us; but we had more than our fists, and with our swords we slew them.

One of the Russians, who were maddened at seeing their prize so nearly taken from them, rushed upon and lunged at me with his bayonet; but I was swifter with my own steel, and he fell.

Terrible blows are given at a time like that, and I remember that I smashed the fellow's arm. He dropped his musket. Instantly McGrath picked the weapon up and killed the Russian with it, driving the bayonet through his body. Then the two of us fell upon and destroyed a Russian who was stubbornly holding Henry to the ground—trampled ground that was like a puddle with the rain, and red with blood.

Henry, almost unconscious, did not understand what was taking place, and when he first saw me he cried:

"Hello, are *you* a prisoner, too?"

"No," I shouted; "we've come to rescue you."

Henry made some sort of objection, but I cut it short by hoisting him on my back and carrying him to our own guns again. I was a strong man then—one of the strongest in my battery. He was terribly cut, and I was wet with his blood when I got him into safety again. Jim, like myself, received the Gold Medal from the French Emperor, and Henry got the Victoria Cross and a commission in the Land Transport Corps, which is now the Army Service Corps. I, too, was offered a commission, but I did not take it. My ambition did not lie in that direction. They removed Henry to a sheltered place, where the surgeons were doing their dreadful but humane work, and I did not see him for many years. Then I came across him at Aldershot, he a captain and me a sergeant still; and many a pleasant jibe did he cast at me for being such a fool, as he put it, as to refuse promotion.

My own battery had suffered dreadfully. Twenty of our men were killed, and thirty-six were wounded. The horses suffered just as much. Out of 280, only thirty-seven were effective at the finish of the fight. Most of the poor creatures were killed; and as for those that were living, the greater number had to be destroyed.

But you can best understand what our losses were when I tell you that my battery alone had heavier casualties than all the rest of the artillery put together. We were on the apex of the hill—Shell Hill, as it was appropriately called—and we were a target for all the Russian gunners.

We had been engaged from an hour before daylight, fighting continuously, and it seemed as if the end of the battle would never come, and as if the grey-coated legions were numberless. It seemed, too, more than once as if the success on which our hearts were set could never be ours, for our battery was shattered and our ammunition was done. Yet even then, I am certain, no such thought as surrender entered the minds of any one of us in Turner's battery.

No, it was a case of fighting to the bitter end, and we did everything we could to stave off disaster. The gunners, the actual fighters of the guns, were dead or wounded; very well, there were still the drivers. So the drivers were hurried up and their whips gave place to swords, and they did as best they could until, late in the day, the French troops came up and took the brunt of the battle off our shoulders. Our Allies themselves suffered very heavily, and, indeed, so great were our losses that even when it was known that we had won the day and scored a glorious victory, there was not heart enough left in any one of us to admit of rejoicing. Who could exult on such a stricken field?

The dead were lying in their thousands, and throughout that awful night most of us who still lived were busy in the heartbreaking work of collecting the wounded and carrying them to the operating places.

But if we had no cause for open rejoicing, we had at any rate the deep, quiet satisfaction of knowing that we had done our duty, and that because we had stuck to our guns and fought the good soldier's fight Inkerman had been made a great victory for the Allies instead of being a defeat which would have meant the ending of the war in favour of the enemy. That is the way I look at it.

Many distinguished officers were present on that great day. Four of high rank were numbered with the dead. Amongst the living who did fine work was the late Duke of Cambridge. I had many talks with him in those far-off Crimean days; and in later years, when his Royal Highness visited at the Hospital, he never failed to see the old gunner, who was wheeled in his invalid chair on to the parade ground.

One day the Duke, after chatting with me, turned and said to the officers who were standing near him: "This is Sergeant Conway, the man who frightened Prince Gortchakoff and all the Russian army at Inkerman!"

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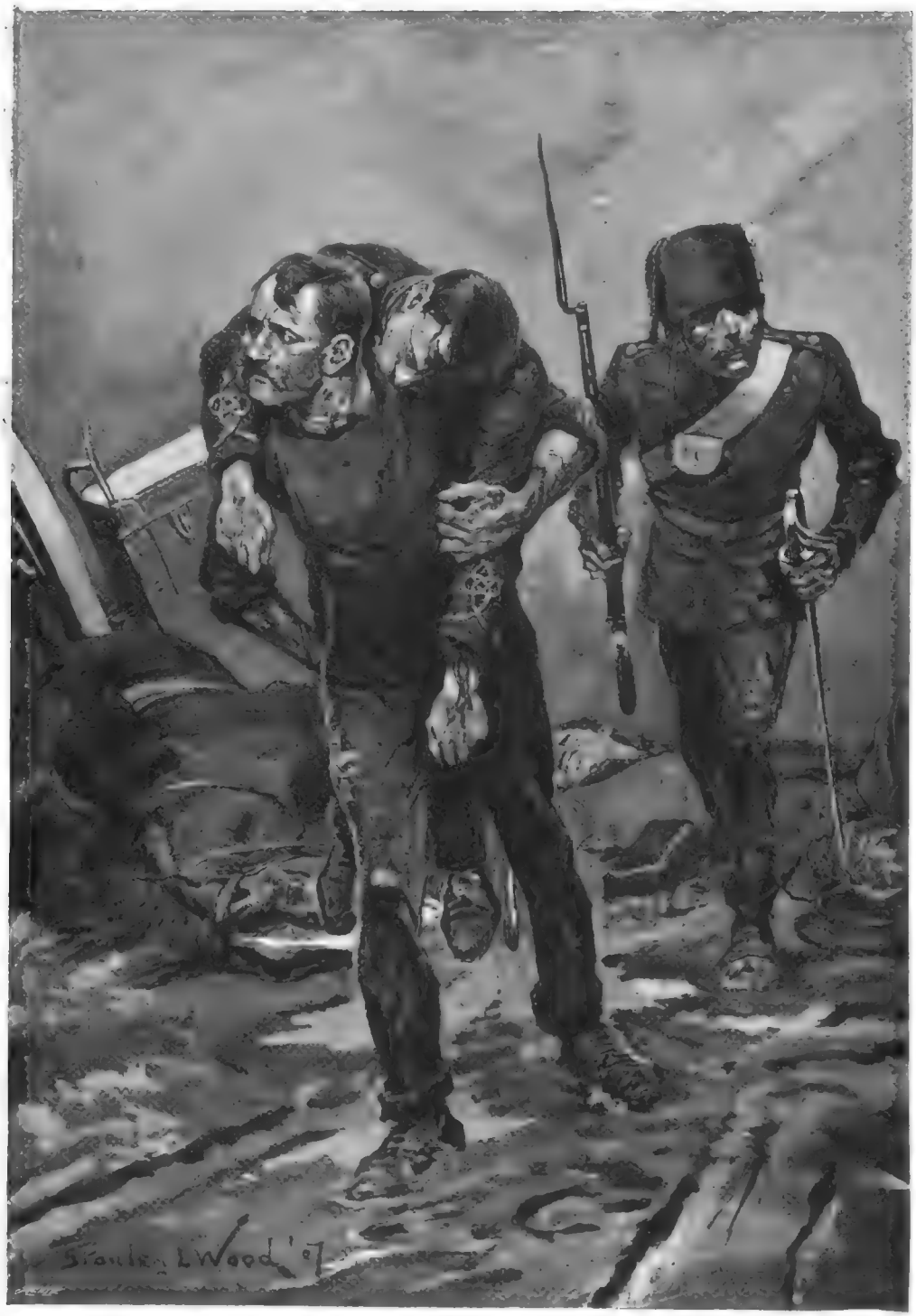

Henry made some sort of objection, but I cut it short by hoisting him on my back and carrying him to our own guns again.

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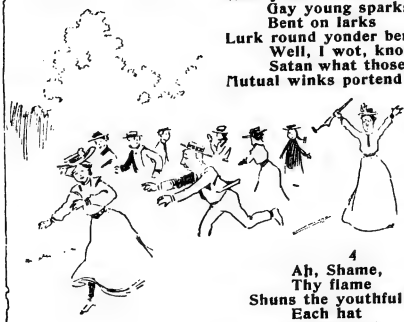
The Crocodile

1

Hul-lo!
There they go
Marching two by two!
Trim, neat,
Slim, sweet,
Quite a "taking" crew!
Glossy locks,
Dainty frocks,
Hats in latest style!
Most demurely
Chatting—surely
A model "crocodile"!

2

Yum! Yum!
Here they come!
Crocodile beware!
Juvenile
Looks of guile
Wait you over there!
Gay young sparks
Bent on larks
Lurk round yonder bend.
Well, I wot, knows
Satan what those
Mutual winks portend!



3

Now they're nigh.
Oh, fie!
Watch those bad young men
Hesitate,
Halt, debate,
Every now and then!
Now with eyes
On the skies,
See, the road they're crossing!
Now each maiden
Her curl-laden
Head is fiercely tossing!

4

Ah, Shame,
Thy flame
Shuns the youthful brow!
Each hat
Greets, pat,
Sylphs ne'er seen till now.
Madame stares,
Madame glares,
Madame scowls—then vainly
To her charges
From afar ges-
Ticulates inanely!

5

Now, Muse,
Infuse
Might into my pen!
Narrate
How fate
Plagued poor Madame then!
For, alas!
It was
Really most unfortunate
That just then two
Beggar-men flew
Up with claims importunate!

6

While she
Helplessly
Tries these pests to rout,
In the van
Each young man
Picks his fancy out.
Here, there,
And everywhere
Flame the crimson faces
Of the wriggling
Mass of giggling
Girls in fond embraces!

7

Suddenly
Saunters by
A guardian of the peace.
Madame shrieks
In high-pitched squeaks
"Police! Police! Police!"
As he hies
Towards her cries,
Each decorum-scorner
Without mishap
Gaily disap-
Pears around the corner.

E. W. Morrison.

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Real Life Romances.

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Suitable Real Life Romances from Readers, Provided that They are Properly Authenticated and Five Hundred Words in Length.

The Nocturnal Visitor.

AN INDIAN ROMANCE.

NOT long ago a young girl of about nineteen was living with her parents and rest of her family in India for a short while.

They lived in a beautiful bungalow a little distance from Calcutta. It was a very large and rambling structure, each room possessing French windows which opened on to a veranda.

The life there was very gay, and full to the brim with all kinds of excitement and interests, and the girl in question was always the first in any expedition, hunting or otherwise, in which there promised to be a spice of danger.

Her pluck and nerve were the wonder and admiration of all her friends, but she herself confesses that the following incident did really make her blood run cold, and that even now she shudders at the thought of what *might* have happened.

They both returned to find a dark, naked figure standing over an open drawer.

She was the proud possessor of several pets; but her favourite was a very fine dog, which accompanied her everywhere, and at night slept beside or under her bed.

One evening, having retired to her room rather later than usual, she felt instinctively that there was some unknown presence near her; but, being tired, she got into bed as quickly as possible and put out the light.

Sleep, however, would not come, and in a short while she heard a muffled sound from beneath the bed.

Thinking it was her dog, she called him by name and put out her hand for him to lick, as he usually did. The next minute she felt a tongue passing over her palm; but to her unutterable horror the tongue was not rough like that of a dog, and she knew it could belong to none other than a human being!

Instantly withdrawing her hand, she lay motionless for a while as if satisfied—but nearly paralysed with fright—and tried to make up her mind as to the best course of action.

If she screamed her nocturnal visitor might possibly attack her, and in any case would escape by the window before help could reach her.

In a few moments her mind was made up, and without uttering a sound she bravely got out of bed and fled into the adjoining room, where her brother slept.

On awakening him they both returned to find a dark, naked figure standing over an open drawer.

On seeing them the native made a dash for the open French window in order to escape, and would have succeeded had it not been for a clever idea that flashed into the girl's mind.

Both the brother and sister knew it would be useless to try to catch the thief, as he was oiled all over. But just as he reached the window the girl rushed forward and in a flash flung one of the curtains round him, which enabled her brother to hold him till help came.

Thus his attempted flight was frustrated and he was captured.

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A Gallant Deed.

HOW TWO DOGS WERE RESCUED FROM A SHAFT.

THE beginning of this episode is not pleasant, for a deed of horrible cruelty must be told. Some months ago a man might have been observed walking furtively and leading two dogs by a rope. The scene was a portion of land in which lay several disused pits, and situated in the neighbourhood of Ruabon in North Wales.

What follows is a matter of deduction, for no one but the perpetrator of the affair was present. Still, justice claimed the man, despite his efforts to escape detection.

The man paused before the mouth of a worked-out pit; not a care for the horrible means which he had devised for the destruction of the poor animals came to his mind, not a thought that for a pat and an occasional kind word, either one of the dogs would have followed him to the end of the world.

Not a soul was in sight. What mattered now what happened—no one would see! With a sharp jerk the man dragged the dogs to the brink of the dark, evil-looking shaft. A piercing howl, and both had disappeared into the depths.

A man might have been seen walking furtively, and leading two dogs by a rope.

Then the scoundrel who had perpetrated this soulless crime slunk away. What did he care, so long as he was rid of the two dogs, how much they suffered? Supposing they endured agonies of hunger and thirst, no one would know—why should he trouble?

Sixteen days had elapsed since the preceding incident was enacted. Two miners passed near the disused shaft. A pitiful whine, seeming to rise from nowhere, fell on their ears. The men paused, looking to right and left with puzzled eyes.

Again and again they heard the same plaintive cry as of some animal in distress.

Then one paused before the shaft. It was from down there that the sounds proceeded.

With one accord the two miners lighted their lamps and began to descend the shaft. The way was difficult; one slip and either of them might fall, perhaps to death. But troubled by no such thoughts, only filled with a desire to relieve the creature, be what it might, that was in distress, the men clung to their mission.

At last they reached the base of the shaft. The air was choking and their lamps suddenly began to grow dim and finally went out. Now, side by side, working along the heavy, foul darkness, facing a certain death from the poisonous air should either of them lose consciousness, the men moved about the shaft. Suddenly they felt the warm bodies of two animals—dogs—which were huddled side by side. And now, in the heavy darkness, they realised that what they touched was little more than skin and bones.

Each man lifted one of the poor animals on to his shoulders, and then began the terrible ascent of the shaft, with heads throbbing, and consumed by deadly sickness from the noxious gas.

Bit by bit the story of the rescue of the two dogs was noised abroad. In noble houses the heroism of the two miners was told, and everywhere in the neighbourhood praises were heaped upon the men.

Still more, on a certain day some weeks later, Charles Evans and Herbert Griffiths stood forward modestly amid their fellow-townsmen and were presented with silver match-boxes by representatives of the Dumb Friends' League. More tributes to their bravery followed, one being from Lord Llangattock.

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The Stranded Motor-car.

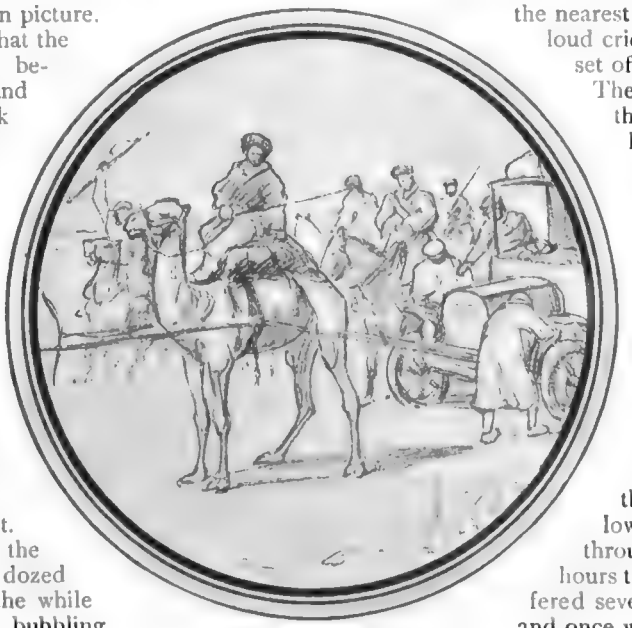
AN INCIDENT OF THE PEKIN-PARIS RACE.

ON Wednesday early in June a motor would have been noticed (if, indeed, there was anyone to see it in such a lonely place) ploughing its way across the sea of sand and shingle known as the Gobi desert. Three Frenchmen were seated in the car, Monsieur Cornier, a newspaper correspondent, and a mechanic. Suddenly the car began to slow down. The engines ceased to work. Not an ounce of petrol remained, and twenty miles lay between them and the nearest spot where the authorities had established a petrol depot.

Meanwhile, the sun beat down with a force that only those who have faced the desert heat can picture. The little water that the travellers carried became exhausted, and their small stock of provisions soon gave out.

To abandon the car never for a moment came to the consideration of any of the party. Sooner or later, a caravan would come along, for they had followed the customary track across the desert.

Night fell, and the three motorists dozed fitfully, haunted the while by visions of bubbling springs and wells for which their dry throats longed.



The remainder of the Chunchuses, having harnessed two camels to the car, escorted it as slowly it was dragged along.

A Mogul woman approached on a camel. By making signs Monsieur Cornier explained to her their plight. The woman nodded her comprehension, and at once allowed the motorists to hitch the camel to the car. But strive as it would, the great beast could not move it, so the woman went on her way, and the stranded motorists faced the terrific heat, hoping that soon a caravan would come.

Again night fell. Hungry, but still greater in need of water, the three men once more entered the car and sought to find relief in sleep. They were awakened by strange sounds. By the bright light of the desert moon they saw that they were surrounded by a band of fierce Chunchuses, mounted, and armed with rifles.

Leaping from the car, Monsieur Cornier approached one, who, by his costume and manner, appeared to be the chief. His two companions waited in the car. They knew that out in the lonely desert they were at the mercy of this fierce, roving band, should they prove unfriendly.

Meanwhile, Monsieur Cornier appeared to be finding favour with the chief. At last, by signs and broken sentences of Chinese, he succeeded in inducing the chief to allow some of his men to take a letter to the nearest station, and with loud cries half the band set off at full gallop.

The remainder of the Chunchuses, having harnessed two camels to the car, escorted it as slowly it was dragged along towards the distant station. The journey began at one o'clock on the Friday, and continued till three on the following day. All through those long hours the motorists suffered severely from thirst, and once when they passed a well, drank deep of the tepid, nauseating water.

Suddenly a band of horsemen, raising a huge cloud of sand, came in sight. The sharp, cracking sound of rifles filled the air. At first it appeared as if they were about to be attacked, but as the horsemen drew near it was seen that it was the party that had been dispatched by the chief. A few minutes later, amidst the shouts of the Chunchuses and the cracking of rifles, the motorists saw to their joy that they were bearing cans of the precious petrol.

A great shout of triumph filled the air, as with tanks replenished, the car moved off in triumph.

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Saved by a Pencil-case!

THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF A NAVAL POSTMAN.

THE British protected cruiser to which I act as postman was anchored one dark winter evening about a mile from the crude breakwater of Patras.

Immediately upon the arrival of the man-o'-war, I had been sent ashore to secure our over-due mails, dispatch telegrams, and ascertain the postal regulations of the port.

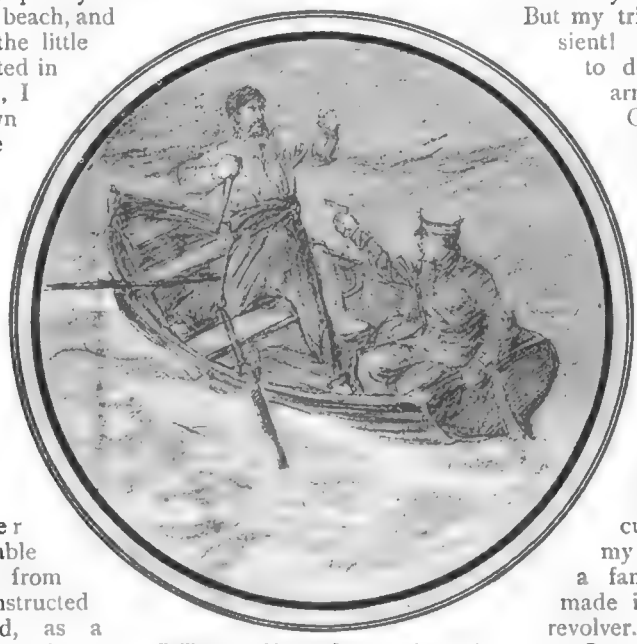
Loaded with bags of correspondence for the bluejackets abroad, I returned to the beach late in the evening and shouted at the top of my voice: "Varka! Varka!" (Boat! Boat!)

A battered skiff, rowed by two coarse-featured Greeks, quickly drew up to the pebbly beach, and I stepped into the little craft, where, seated in the stern sheets, I was rapidly drawn away from the town of Patras with its myriad sparkling lights.

Neither the boat nor the men were at all to my liking; but, there being no other boats within hail, I could not be particular.

The cruiser swung on her cable about a mile from the rudely-constructed breakwater, and, as a heavy sea was running at the time, it was no light task which the men had undertaken. The two Greeks—who seemed but shadows in the blackness of the night—carried on a whispered conversation as they laboriously propelled the leaky boat; and, dark as was the night, I could not fail to note the ominous glances which they occasionally cast in my direction.

Their threatening looks made me feel quite uneasy, as I was unarmed—through my own carelessness—and I began to conjure up all kinds of ghostly encounters which had taken place in these rocky Grecian islands.



Pulling out this toy, I presented it at the head of my assailant.

My meditations were cut short by the actions of the men, who had suddenly ceased rowing and were standing over me in a threatening manner, blusteringly demanding payment of their fare! Helpless as I was, my pride as a British marine forced me to refuse, though my heart was thumping like a steam hammer.

"I'll pay when you take me alongside," I replied firmly, "and not before!"

With a curse and a hiss one of the brutes was upon me; but I was prepared for him, and hit out with all my strength, luckily felling the man to the bottom of the boat, where he lay like a log.

But my triumph was transient! I glanced upward to discover the long arm of the second Greek stretched above me, in the bony hand of which a long, murderous knife reflected the few straggling rays of the almost hidden moon!

Just as I was giving myself up for lost, a brilliant idea occurred to me. In my pocket I carried a fancy pencil-case, made in imitation of a revolver. Pulling out this toy, I presented it at the head of my assailant with a desperate air of bravado.

To my joy the man shrank back, completely cowed by the seeming weapon! Still keeping the man covered, yet fearing that he might at any moment detect the trick, I ordered him and his now recovered ally to pull me to the man-o'-war.

Never before were the lights of the vessel so welcome to me. A few more strokes and the brightly-illumined gangway was reached. With what joy did I climb aboard my floating home and deliver the precious mails. Thank Heaven—I was saved! Saved—by a tiny pencil-case!

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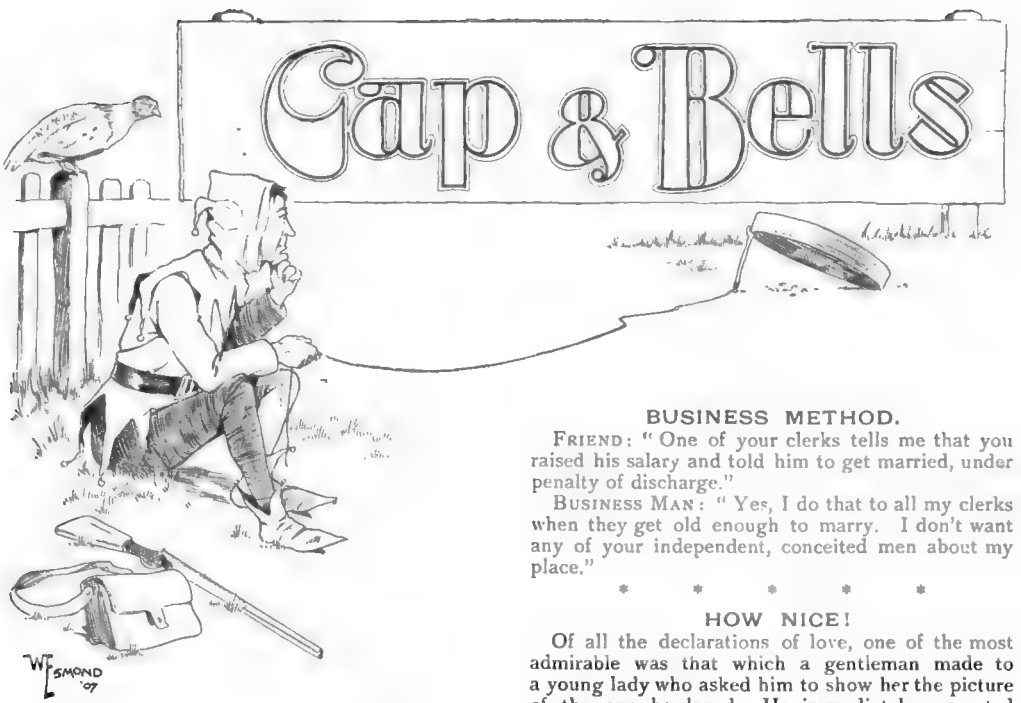

DID HE SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE?

"Better not wait for Charley any longer. You know what it is when a fellow is calling on his girl. Ah, there they are now. He is just bidding her good night."

"All right; let us go and have a game of billiards. We'll just have time."

* * * * *

PERFECTLY USELESS.

"What a man your father is," exclaimed Mrs. Homespun, looking up from the letter she held in her hand. "He says he has bought a French clock, and will bring it home with him. What will it be good for except as an ornament? None of us can tell the time by it, unless you can, Edith. You know something about French, don't you?"

* * * * *

NOT FAIR.

LITTLE ETHEL: "I wish I had a new doll."

MAMMA: "Your doll is as good as ever."

LITTLE ETHEL: "Well, I am just as good as ever, too, but the angels gave you a new baby."

* * * * *

CORROBORATION.

MABEL: "I really believe Tom thinks the world of me."

KATE: "I've often heard him say that this was a miserable world, and he was heartily sick of it."

* * * * *

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

CREDITOR (determinedly): "I shall call every week until you pay me this account, sir."

DEBTOR (blandly): "Then, sir, there seems every possibility of our acquaintance ripening into friendship."

BUSINESS METHOD.

FRIEND: "One of your clerks tells me that you raised his salary and told him to get married, under penalty of discharge."

BUSINESS MAN: "Yes, I do that to all my clerks when they get old enough to marry. I don't want any of your independent, conceited men about my place."

* * * * *

HOW NICE!

Of all the declarations of love, one of the most admirable was that which a gentleman made to a young lady who asked him to show her the picture of the one he loved. He immediately presented her with a mirror.

* * * * *

A DRAWBACK.

"I wish my teeth were not so regular," sighed the young woman, regarding herself pensively in the glass. "Every time I smile when I'm talking to Harry he looks as if he wondered how much they cost."

"I am surprised, Bobby," said his father reprovingly, "that you should strike your little brother. Don't you know that it is cowardly to hit one smaller than yourself?"

"Then why do you hit me, father?" inquired the boy, with an air of having the better of it.

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The sort of person who gets on your nerves—at least, so James Minor thinks.

HIBERNIAN LOGIC.

"Pat, what time is it?"

"Oi don't know, Mike; but let's guess at it, and then, begorra, the man that comes furhest off can go to the kitchen and look."

* * * * *

HARD LUCK.

"Johnnie, what is the meaning of *'Je ne sais pas'?*"

"I don't know."

"Then go back to your seat till you do know."

* * * * *

THE REASON WHY.

SAMSO: "He is not rich, and yet he makes a great deal more money than he spends."

RODD: "How can that be?"

SAMSO: "He works in the Mint."

* * * * *

A JAR.

HOPEFUL SPINSTER: "What, as a man of the world, do you consider the most desperate form of gambling?"

THE BACHELOR: "Marriage."

* * * * *

NATURALLY.

"Do you believe in the power of the human eye with a wild beast?" asked Gableigh.

"Yes," said the professor; "the power of the eye is very useful—to see the wild beast coming."

* * * * *

THUS IT IS WRITTEN.

JACK: "May I kiss you, then?"

PERDITA (blushingly): "Some time in the future."

JACK (eagerly): "When?"

PERDITA: "Day before to-morrow."

And so it came to pass.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

WILLIE: "Mamma, I dreamt last night that I had a fight with a bear as big as a house, and he tore me 'most to pieces. Does it mean anything when you dream like that?"

HIS MAMMA (taking him tenderly but firmly across her knee): "Yes, my son, it does. It means that I know now exactly what became of that plate of trifle that was left after supper last night." (Whack, whack, whack.) "That's what it means."

* * * * *

MUTUAL DISCLOSURES.

MISS SMILAX: "And so Miss Gilt and Mr. Gotnix really got married. Was it a love match?"

MARY: "On the contrary. I should call it a hate match."

MISS SMILAX: "Why? I don't understand you."

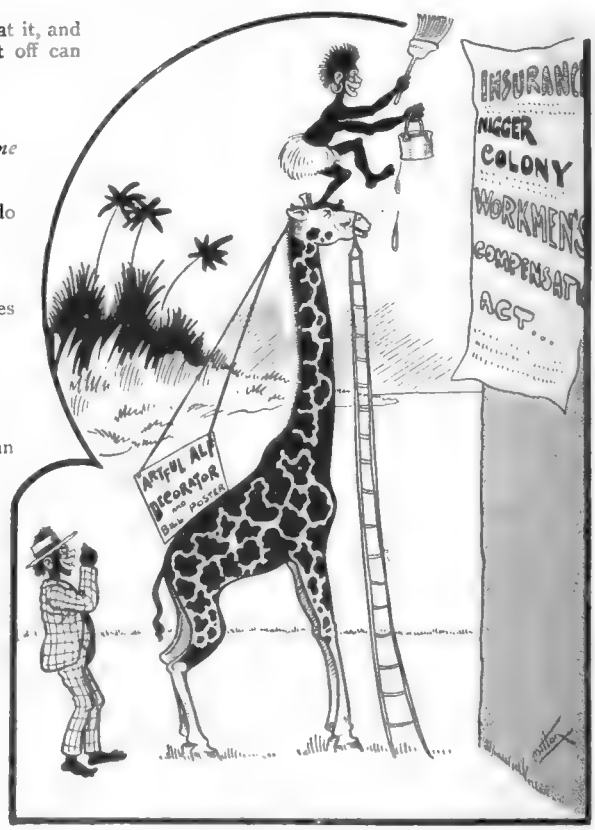
MARY: "Why, she hated to be an old maid, and he hated to be poor."

* * * * *

NO CAUSE FOR ALARM.

SALLY: "Captain Shuffles said the harbour is full of sharks, and I am awfully afraid of them—aren't you?"

CLARICE: "Oh, I'm not afraid. The captain told me that they were all man-eating sharks."



"Now, mind you don't fall and kill yourself."

"All right. But the thought of getting a pension for life makes me feel dreadfully giddy!"

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2/- INSURES YOUR COMPLEXION

Dr. HARLAN'S
BEAUTY-CUP MASSAGE
For the Face, Neck, Arms and Body.

"No woman who owns one of these wonderful little Cups need have any fear of wrinkles or blackheads.

The simplicity of this scientific system of self-applied massage, and the speed with which it clears the complexion, are almost beyond belief. A single soothing application of the little Beauty-Cup produces remarkable results. Blackheads in many cases are banished in sixty seconds. It pumps impurities out of the blood by atmospheric pressure, rounds out the cheeks, arms and neck, and plumps the waste places in the body with wonderful rapidity. Acts directly on the circulation and feeds fresh pure blood to the tissues, making the flesh firm and fair, and the skin soft and satiny. **Dr. Harlan's Beauty-Cup** sent by mail in plain wrapper—with our Beauty Book—to any address for **2/1** P.O. (abroad **2/6** M.O.)

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Permanently, Painlessly, Root and Branch by my Scientific treatment specially prepared for each individual case. Enclose stamp to pay postage.—**Helen M. J. Temple, 8 Blenheim Street, Oxford Street, London, W.**

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"Your Servant and Your Friend."
—"Two Gentlemen of Verona."

VINOLIA

SOAP.

A ROSE

by any other name will smell as sweet. Call Vinolia Soap what you will, you cannot lessen its virtue. No complexion can resist its charm.

Premier, 4d. Floral, 6d.
Toilet (Otto), 10d. Vestal, 2/6.
Vinolia Powder, 1/-.

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BARGAINING WITH A BOOKING-CLERK.

A gentleman connected with the Perth and Inverness Railway relates that when that line was first opened, some of the natives, wholly unaccustomed to fixed prices, endeavoured to deal with the ticket-clerk as they would with a shopkeeper.

The following is one of the dialogues that ensued:

COUNTRYMAN: "What is the price to Kingussie?"

TICKET-CLERK: "Two-and-eightpence."

COUNTRYMAN: "Two-and-eightpence? Hech! never! I'll give you two shillings."

TICKET-CLERK: "There is no reduction. The fare is two-and-eightpence."

COUNTRYMAN: "Make it two-and-tuppence and it's a bargain."

TICKET CLERK: "I tell you, the fare's two-and-eightpence."

COUNTRYMAN: "It's only a matter of thirty mile."

TICKET CLERK: "It doesn't matter what it is. That is the fare."

COUNTRYMAN: "I'll give you two-and-threepence."

TICKET CLERK: "It won't do."

COUNTRYMAN: "Two-and-fourpence, then."

TICKET CLERK: "No, nor two-and-fivepence."

At two-and-sixpence he made a dead stand, and, finding the clerk inexorable, he went away and waited till the next train, when he came back with his offer of two-and-sixpence, in hopes of finding the clerk more accommodating.

* * * *

SELF EXPLANATORY.

CORA TO JAKE: "Dear Jake,—Come to-morrow evening, sure. Papa is at home, but is laid up with a sore foot.—CORA."

JAKE TO CORA: "Dear Cora,—I can't come to-morrow evening. I am laid up on account of your papa's sore foot.—JAKE."

* * * *

LUCID.

A Posen daily paper contains the following beautiful police regulation: "Henceforth, every vehicle must carry a light when darkness begins. Darkness always begins as soon as the street lamps are lit."

A BEGINNER.

Rude Boy: "Hullo, mister, digging yer grave?"

ATTENDING TO DETAILS.

"John," said the accident insurance agent, "be sure and drop in at old Curmudge's as you pass this morning, and express my sympathy over the loss of his brother in the railway accident."

"But old Curmudge had no brother in the accident," said the solicitor.

"Well, what in the name of all that is unholy has that got to do with it?" said the agent cheerily, "all he can do is to tell you so."

"But it might alarm him unnecessarily," persisted the patient solicitor.

"That's the point—that's exactly the point," returned the agent buoyantly. "Alarm him as much as possible. His own policy runs out next month, and it is one of our duties to remind our patrons that in the midst of life we are surrounded by accidents."

"And, John," he added, as the solicitor departed on his errand, "take this banana peel, and put it carefully on the front steps. It is by attention to details that the symmetry of perfect business is built up."

* * * * *

TOPICAL.

They had been engaged to be married fifteen years, and still he had not mustered up courage enough to ask her to name "the happy day." One evening he called in a peculiar frame of mind and asked her to sing something tender and touching, something that would "move him." She sat down at the piano and sang "Darling, I am Growing Old."

FOND MAMMA. "MY LITTLE BOY GROWS MORE LIKE HIS FATHER EVERY DAY"
VISITOR. "DEAR, DEAR! AND OF COURSE, YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT IT EITHER!"
PA

* * * *

A SMART MAN.

"How does Tankins manag to keep up his extravagant mode of living?"

"He has credit."

"How did he get it?"

"By pretending to be worried almost to death over the income tax."

* * * *

HOPING AGAINST HOPE.

"I say, Fenilworth, you know that tanner I owe you? You—you haven't forgotten about it by any chance, have you?"

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Uncle: "So, my dear nephew, you haven't forgotten your old uncle on his birthday. You have bought me this nice smoking-cap for a present. Thanks, little nephew, here is sixpence for you."

Little Nephew: "Boo—oo—ooh! It cost me half-a-crown!"

A COOKING SECRET.

MR. E. CONOMIE: "Did you write to that man who advertises to show people how to make puddings without milk and have them richer?"

MRS. E. CONOMIE: "Yes; and sent him a shilling."

MR. E. CONOMIE: "What did he reply?"

MRS. E. CONOMIE: "Use cream."

* * * * *

FEMININE LOGIC.

MISS FOURTH SEASON: "Mr. Fledgley proposed to me last night."

MISS STINGER: "Did you accept him?"

MISS FOURTH SEASON: "No; he is so young. I promised to wait a few years, however."

MISS STINGER: "So nice of you, dear! He is younger than you, of course, but in a year or two he won't be!"

* * * * *

A MERCENARY CHILD.

"And why, Jennie, did you tell Winnie you wouldn't be his little wife?"

"'Tause he didn't ast till he knowed I had a new sixpence."

* * * * *

A PROFESSIONAL ASSET.

SHE: "You won't object to have my dear mamma live with us after we are married, will you?"

HE (a young physician): "Not at all. In fact, she'll be most welcome."

SHE: "I'm so glad you feel that way."

HE: "Yes; you see, she is always ailing, and I really need someone to experiment upon."

WHY, INDEED?

"Pa, is generals brave men?" asked Johnny of his father.

"Yes, my son, as a rule," was the answer.

"Then why does artists always make pictures of 'em standing on a hill three miles away, looking at the battle through an opera-glass?"

* * * * *

NO REASON WHATEVER.

"So you have written a novel?"

"Yes."

"Has your heroine satin skin, velvety eyelashes, and hair like threads of spun gold?"

"Yes."

"Is her name Gwendoline?"

"It is."

"Then I don't see why it shouldn't be a success."

* * * * *

HE KNEW.

"Old fellow, I'm engaged to Miss Dash. She's a dear girl!"

"She is so. She cost me about £100 the time I was engaged to her."

* * * * *

COMPLIMENTARY.

LITTLE GLADYS: "Granny, go down on your hands and knees for a minute, please."

FOND GRANDMOTHER: "What am I to do that for, my pet?"

LITTLE GLADYS: "'Cause I want to draw an elephant."

* * * * *

THE ESSENCE OF MEANNESS.

Probably the meanest thief ever caught is Louis Bourgard, of Paris, who recently, while riding in a cab, ripped open the cushions, tied the horsehair into a parcel, sold it while the cab waited for him, and with the money procured from selling his "plunder" paid the cabman his fare.

First Workman: "Who's 'im?"

Second Workman: "That's Bacco, the fasting man."

First Workman: "'E ain't a Britisher. 'E's a Frenchman."

Second Workman: "Not 'im. 'E looks more like a 'Ungary 'un."

[CAP AND BELLS continued overleaf]

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FIRMNESS NECESSARY.

MISS OLDGIRL (coyly): "I had a strange dream the other night, Mr. Jones, I dreamt—only think!—that you and I were married and on our wedding tour. You don't know how real it seemed. Did you ever dream such a thing?"

MR. JONES (firmly): "No, Miss Oldgirl, I did not. In fact, I haven't had the nightmare for a good many years!"

* * * *

A KIND THOUGHT.

HE: "Well, for my part, I like a picture that tells a story."

SHE: "Mrs. Witherby's portrait ought to suit you then. It makes her positively handsome."

* * * *

A CALLING READY TO HAND.

AMATEUR POET (loftily): "Aw! Here is a little thing I wrote in five minutes last evening."

EDITOR (astonished): "You did? Why, man alive! anyone who can write that in five minutes ought to make his living by his pen."

POET (much flattered): "Oh, thanks!"

EDITOR: "Yes. You can get two shillings a thousand for addressing envelopes."

* * * * *

MADE TO ORDER.

MRS. PARVENU: "I want one of these globes."

SHOPMAN: "Here is one, madam, that is used in all our schools."

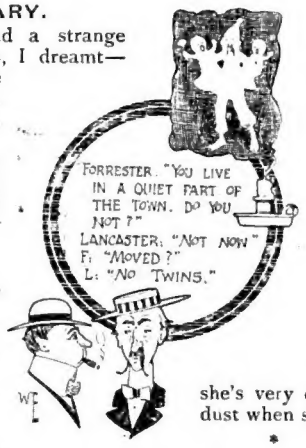
MRS. PARVENU: "Well, if you will have me a few more islands painted on them empty spaces I'll take it."

* * * * *

"THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH—"

"Remember, witness," sharply exclaimed the counsel for the defence, "you are on oath."

"There ain't no danger of my forgettin' it," replied the witness sullenly, "I'm tellin' the truth for nothin', when I could have made fifteen shillings by lyin' for your side of the case, and you know it."



THEN HE SPOKE.

"We went skating on Christmas Day. I tried hard to get him to propose; but there we sat, and though he saw I knew what he was thinking of he just remained silent until I hit upon an idea."

"What was it?"

"I dug my skates with some force into the slippery surface, and asked him to notice how easy it was to break the ice."

* * * *

COULD QUIETNESS GO FURTHER?

LADY VISITOR: "That new girl of yours seems very nice and quiet."

MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE: "Yes, she's very quiet. She doesn't even disturb the dust when she's cleaning the room."

* * * * *

HE HAD FORGOTTEN THEM.

DR. GRIFFIN: "I must say that the world is very ungrateful towards our profession. How seldom one sees a public memorial erected to a doctor."

MRS. GOLIGHTLY: "How seldom? Oh, Doctor, think of our cemeteries."

* * * * *

NOT WHAT HE MEANT.

SHE: "Why, I am not ready to marry, Mr. Freshman."

HE: "Will you let me know when you are?"

SHE: "Certainly, sir. I'll send you a wedding card."

* * * * *

SIMPLE.

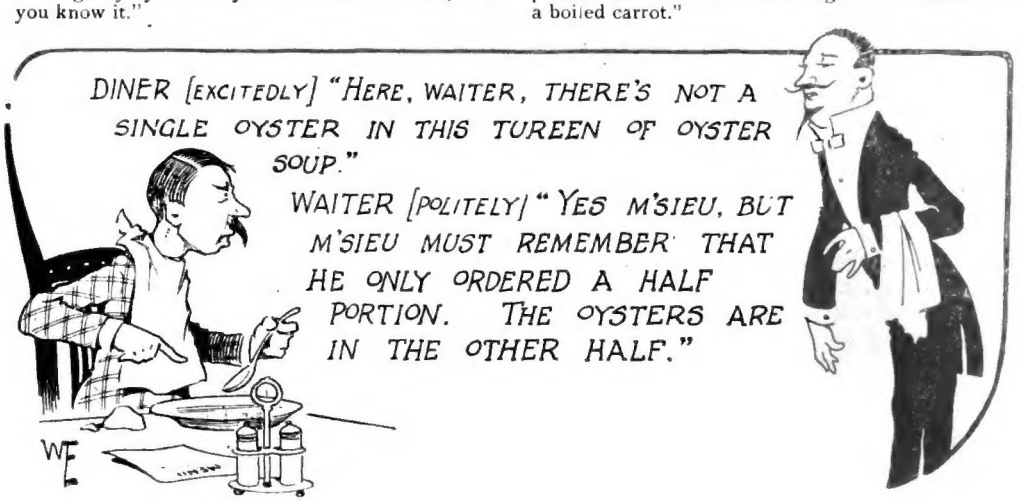
CHOLLY: "Why are clocks made so that the hands move towards the right?"

WILLIE: "The whole aim of a clock's existence is to go right."

* * * * *

A FEW WELL-CHOSEN WORDS.

A rural editor, speaking of a quill-driving contemporary, says: "His intellect is so dense that it would take the augur of common sense longer to penetrate it than to bore through Mont Blanc with a boiled carrot."


DINER [EXCITEDLY] "HERE, WAITER, THERE'S NOT A SINGLE OYSTER IN THIS TUREEN OF OYSTER SOUP."
WAITER [POLITELY] "YES M'SIEU, BUT M'SIEU MUST REMEMBER THAT HE ONLY ORDERED A HALF PORTION. THE OYSTERS ARE IN THE OTHER HALF."

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

THE NEW SERIES BY MR. GHOSH.

Now I want to draw your special attention to this remarkable series of articles (see page 497), the acquisition of which I am still congratulating myself over. Very little is known by the average English readers of the wild beasts of his country's grandest possession over seas, and I am proud to be the humble means of diffusing so much first-rate knowledge on a subject of such profound interest.

Next month Mr. Ghosh will tell you all about the elephant as he lives in the jungle, and this article is in every way quite as interesting and containing quite as many novel facts as the present article on the cobra.

By-the-way, when you have read the present article, will you drop me a postcard with your opinion on it?

MISSING FLOWERS, VEGETABLES, AND TOWNS.

The large response to this little competition has astonished me, considering the vast competitions on which the public are just now engaged, and the comparative difficulty of the task which I set before my readers.

Some of the attempts were very clever indeed, especially the poems which dealt in flowers. Competitors seemed to prefer them to either towns or vegetables, but they were rather more difficult to deal with, as many of the names used seem to be local, and not to be found in any botanical treatise. Whoever, for instance, heard of the flower called "lady-in-waiting," which a Yorkshire competitor includes in his verses? I notice also that several of the names used in "Missing Towns" verses are not included in any gazetteer. It is just possible that some of the competitors invented names to suit their purposes, and hoped that I should not investigate. But I'm too old a bird to be caught napping like that!

Well, here are the three prize-winners, each of which sent the best set of verses dealing with missing flowers, vegetables, and towns respectively:

Miss K. E. Oates,
87 Courtland Avenue,
Ilford,
Essex.

Miss W. R. Clark,
76 Tyrwhitt Road,
St. John's,
London, S.E.

Mr. M. Gilbert,
The White House,
St. Margarets,
Harleston,
Norfolk.

To each of these competitors I have forwarded one guinea, and hope they will accept my congratulations on their clever verses.

A FRANK ANSWER.

A short while ago I asked a young lady, who had been pestering me with contributions and urgent appeals that I should publish them, why she was so anxious to get into print. She was not in any want of money—in fact, her circumstances were comfortable far beyond the average.

"Oh," she replied, "people think you so interesting if you're a writer!"

Her frankness quite disarmed me, and I hadn't the heart to tell her that the only interest her literary efforts could arouse would be contemptuous amazement that anyone should care to sign such tenth-rate stuff.

I have put a similar question many times to would-be authors, but have never before received that answer, and yet I am convinced quite two-thirds of them, if they were honest, would give the same reason for their ambition. Which brings one to wonder how many people would prefer to sign really excellent but scantily recognised work than shoddy work that brings them instant recognition. Not a very big percentage, I fear!

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